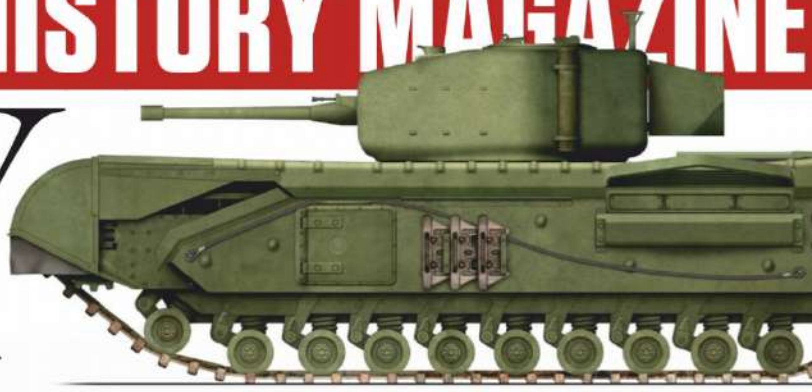
BRITAIN'S BEST MILITARY HISTORY MAGAZINE

HISTORY of WAR

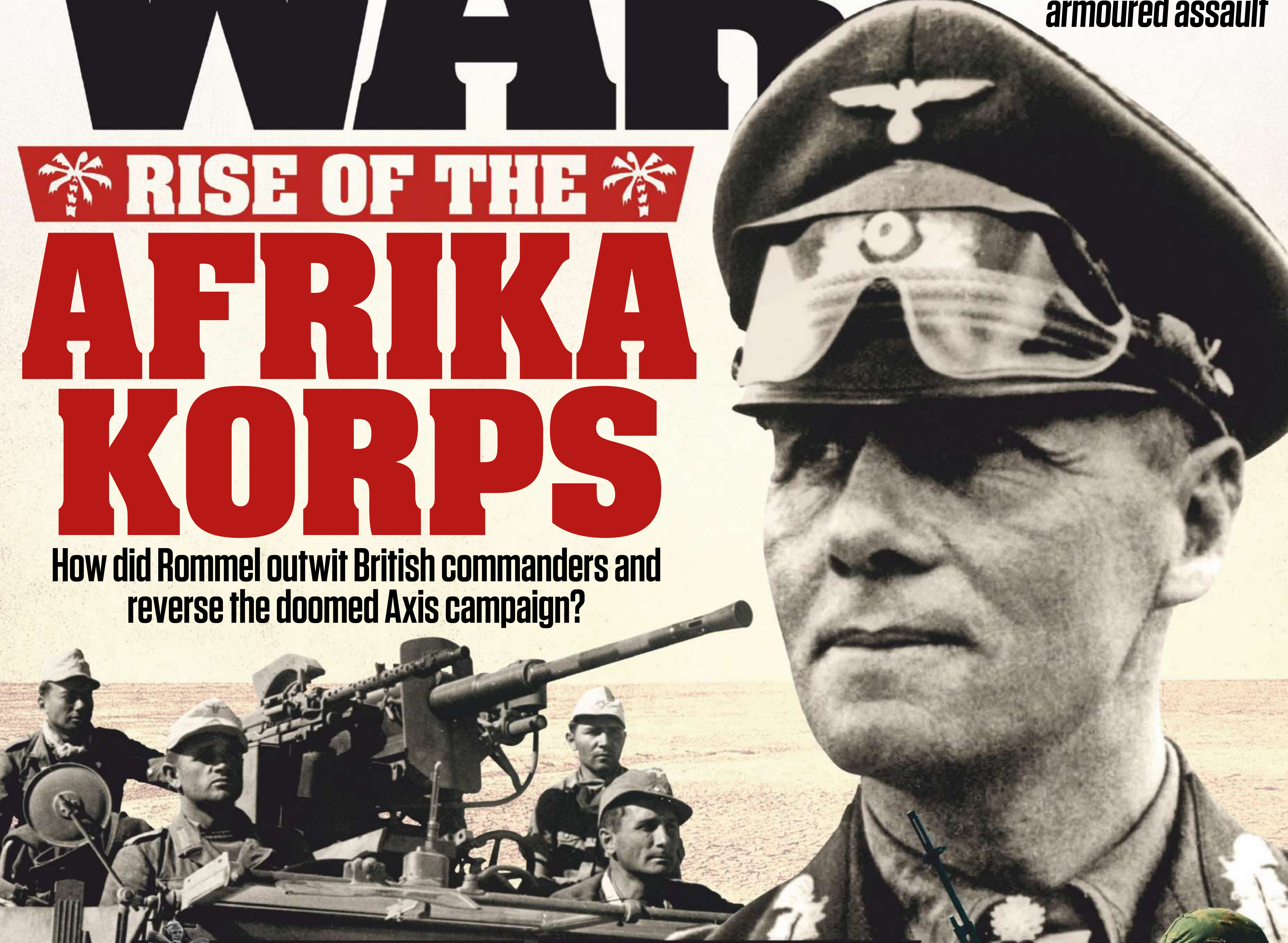


CHURCHILL TANK

Backbone of Britain's armoured assault

RISE OF THE AFRIKA KORPS

How did Rommel outwit British commanders and reverse the doomed Axis campaign?



FUTURE
ISSUE 090

BATTLE OF WORCESTER

Charles II and Cromwell clash in the final battle of the English Civil War

TEENAGE VC HERO

In the final 1918 push, one Private risked his life for his comrades

MARINE'S PTSD BATTLE

Vietnam veteran shares the struggles returning troops faced

KING & COUNTRY
UK AUTHORISED DEALER

AUSTRALIAN MILITARY LAND ROVERS
The Best 4 By 4 By Far!

During the Vietnam War almost 60,000 Australian servicemen, both regular and 'national service' fought there. Deployed alongside them was an eclectic mix of vehicles, tanks, artillery and other military equipment vital for maintaining a modern, effective fighting force in the field.

Among the most useful of the vehicles shipped out from Australia and into Vietnam was the ***Land Rover.***

Designed in the aftermath of World War Two this British-designed, four-wheel drive, off-road vehicle with its excellent sturdiness and cross-country mobility joined the Australian armed forces in the 1950's.

By the early 1960's, after much experience in the field together with substantial modifications and improvements, the Australian military now had a vehicle that was second-to-none-in its class.

AUSSIE LAND ROVERS

King & Country's first-to-be-released Australian 1/4 ton Land Rover is the **'Military Police'** version complete with a seated MP driver and a fully-fitted canvas cover.

Our second *Australian Land Rover* will be the ***'Patrol/General Service'*** vehicle, also with an Army driver, open-topped and minus its side doors and rear hatch to enable both easy access and equally rapid *'debussing'*.

AUSTRALIAN REINFORCEMENTS

In addition to both vehicle models K&C are also releasing a number of all new Australian Army figures including our ***'Military Police'*** set **VN092** and a ***'Mine Clearing'*** team **VN101**. A 3-figure *Royal Australian Regiment* ***'Mortar'*** set **VN117** *plus* another 3-figure set of ***sitting R.A.R. infantrymen*** **VN125** suitable for the open-topped Land Rover **VN118** will also be available in the coming months.

So, if you're looking for great military model Land Rovers and the figures that go with them accept no substitute... ***come on over to King & Country!***

VN101

Mine Clearing Team
2 Figure set

STOP
MILITARY POLICE CHECK POINT
MILITARY POLICE
113-475

VN092

2x Military Policemen
inc. Check Point sign

FIND OUT MORE...

For more details about all of K&C's all-metal, hand-painted, military miniature toy soldiers simply contact :

MAGPIE
(MANCHESTER HOUSE) LTD

MILITARY POLICE
113-475
112-502

VN097
Military Police
Land Rover

VN118
Patrol/ General Service
Land Rover

VN067

© 2021 • KING & COUNTRY

KING & COUNTRY HEADQUARTERS
Suite 2301, 23rd Floor, No.3 Lockhart Road,
Wanchai, Hong Kong
Tel: (852) 2861 3450
E-mail: sales@kingandcountry.com

MAGPIE
1 High Street, Evesham
Worcestershire, WR11 4DA. England UK
Tel: 01386 41631
eBay shop: Manchester House Collectables
Email: magpie2500@aol.com

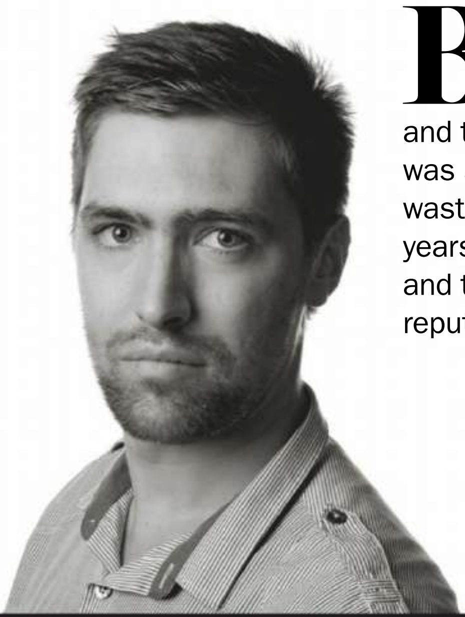
MAGPIE OPENING TIMES
DAILY 9:00AM - 5:30PM
CLOSED WEDNESDAY & SUNDAY

Rommel's Afrika Korps pushed the Allies out of Libya – but the Germans' success wasn't to last

© Alamy

Welcome

By the end of January 1941, Allied forces were basking in the success of Operation Compass, their first major offensive by since the start of the war. Though thousands of Italian troops and their equipment had been captured, a new arrival on the continent was soon to reverse Allied fortunes. Erwin Rommel and the Afrika Korps wasted little time asserting themselves after their arrival in Tripoli 80 years ago. Their astonishing campaign drove the Allies back out of Libya and threatened the capture of Egypt, sealing Rommel and his Korps' reputation in the Second World War.



Tim

Tim Williamson
Editor-in-Chief

CONTRIBUTORS

TOM GARNER

For this issue's Great Battles, Tom recounts the Battle of Worcester, the critical 1651 clash between Cromwell and Charles II (p42). Also, he spoke with Ret. Marine Jack Estes about the challenges faced by Vietnam veterans (p32).

Dr MICHAEL JONES

Author and Fellow of the Royal Historical Society, Mike has written on everything from Agincourt to Stalingrad. On page 24 he recounts the arrival and impact of Rommel and the Afrika Korps, which took place 80 years ago this month.

HARETH AL BUSTANI

The conquest of the Khwarazmian Empire was among the earliest yet most brutal campaigns of the Mongols. Over on page 56, Hareth explains how this once mighty Central Asian realm fell to Genghis Khan's unstoppable ride west.

BRITAIN'S BEST MILITARY HISTORY MAGAZINE
HISTORY OF WAR
RISE OF THE AFRIKA KORPS
CHURCHILL TANK

SUBSCRIBE & SAVE!

Take advantage of our fantastic subscription offers and get History of War for less than half price!

TURN TO PAGE 50

RISE OF THE AFRIKA KORPS

24 On the 80th anniversary of the Afrika Korps' arrival in Tripoli, Dr Michael Jones recounts how the Germans turned the tide in North Africa

Frontline

GREAT TURKISH WAR

12 Timeline
In the final two decades of the 17th century, two superpowers vied for dominance of Eastern Europe

16 Leaders & commanders
Kings, sultans and even the Pope became drawn into this struggle between the Habsburgs and the Sultans

18 The Cretan War
This earlier conflict between the Sultan and the Doge of Venice had a lasting impact on the region

20 The Kingdom of Morea
With the Ottomans distracted, Venice seized the opportunity to restore lost territory in Greece

22 Battle of Zenta
Prince Eugene of Savoy led an outnumbered force against the Ottomans in this decisive clash

HEROES OF THE VICTORIA CROSS

52 This young private risked his life to save his unit during the Hundred Days Offensive

OPERATOR'S HANDBOOK

62 Designed for the trenches, the Churchill tank became a versatile asset to the Allies

06 WAR IN FOCUS
Stunning imagery from throughout history

24 ROMMEL & THE RISE OF THE AFRIKA KORPS
Dr Michael Jones recounts how the infamous outfit made its impact 80 years ago

32 'TIP OF THE SPEAR'
Vietnam vet Jack Estes recalls how he battled PTSD and a hostile post-war public

GREAT BATTLES
42 WORCESTER, 1651
The final chapter of the English Civil War saw Charles II and Cromwell go head to head

HEROES OF THE VICTORIA CROSS
52 THOMAS RICKETS
In the final month of WWI, this young private risked his life to thwart an enemy manoeuvre

56 CRUSHING KHWAREZMIA
This 13th-century Asian empire was among the first to fall to the Mongol horde

OPERATOR'S HANDBOOK
62 CHURCHILL TANK
The British tank built for trench warfare that was adapted for the demands of WWII

Homefront

70 WWII IN PHOTOS
A snapshot of the war this month, 80 years ago

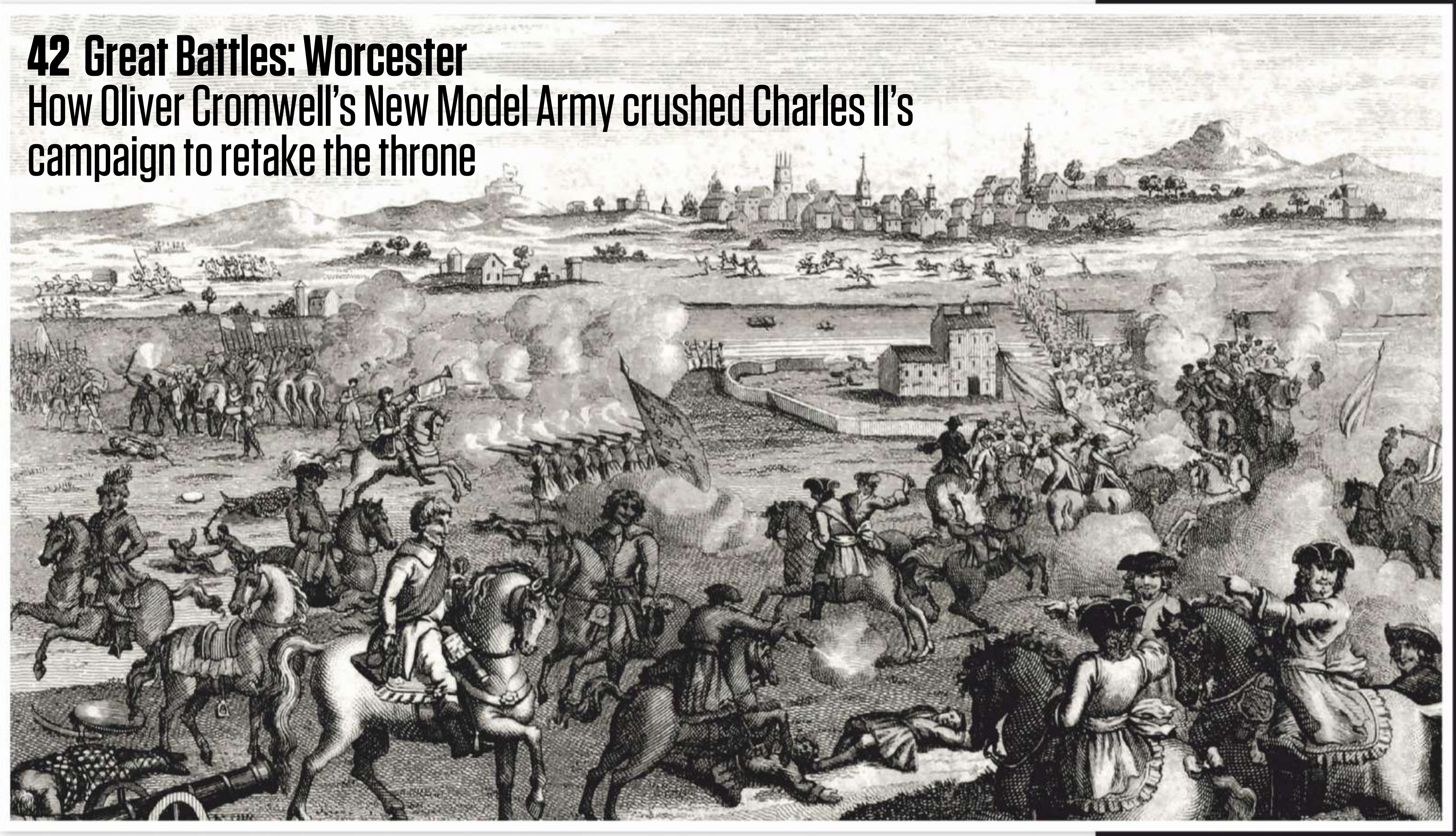
72 MUSEUMS & EVENTS
A roundup of the latest exhibitions and collections

74 REVIEWS
The latest military history book and film releases

78 Q&A
Author Liz Kessler

5 BEST BOOKS ON
79 ROMMEL
Top titles on the Desert Fox

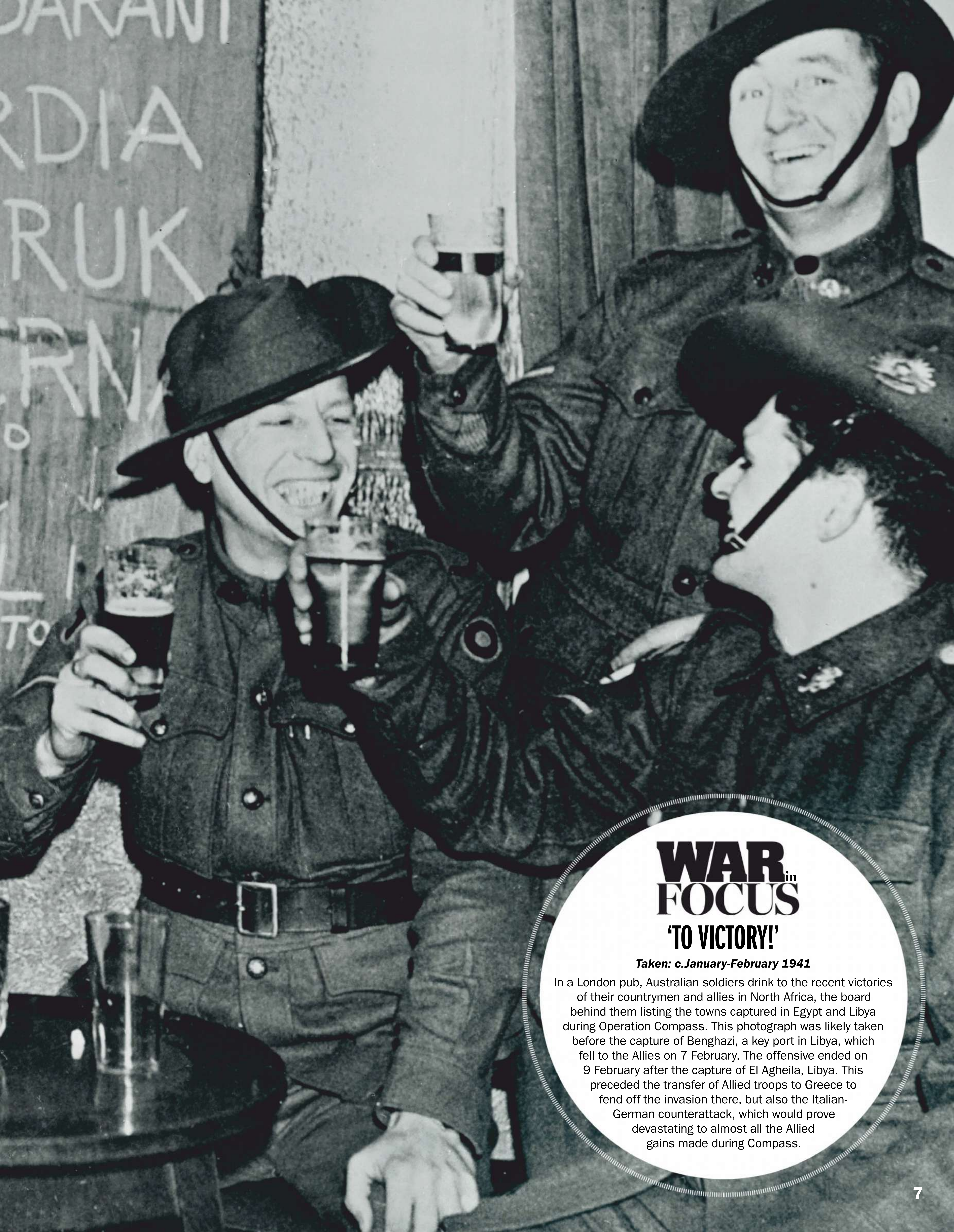
ARTEFACT OF WAR
82 MEDIEVAL TARGE
A 15th-century German shield used for knightly tournaments



42 Great Battles: Worcester
How Oliver Cromwell's New Model Army crushed Charles II's campaign to retake the throne

BAR
TOB
DE
BER
NON S

© Getty



WAR in FOCUS

‘TO VICTORY!’

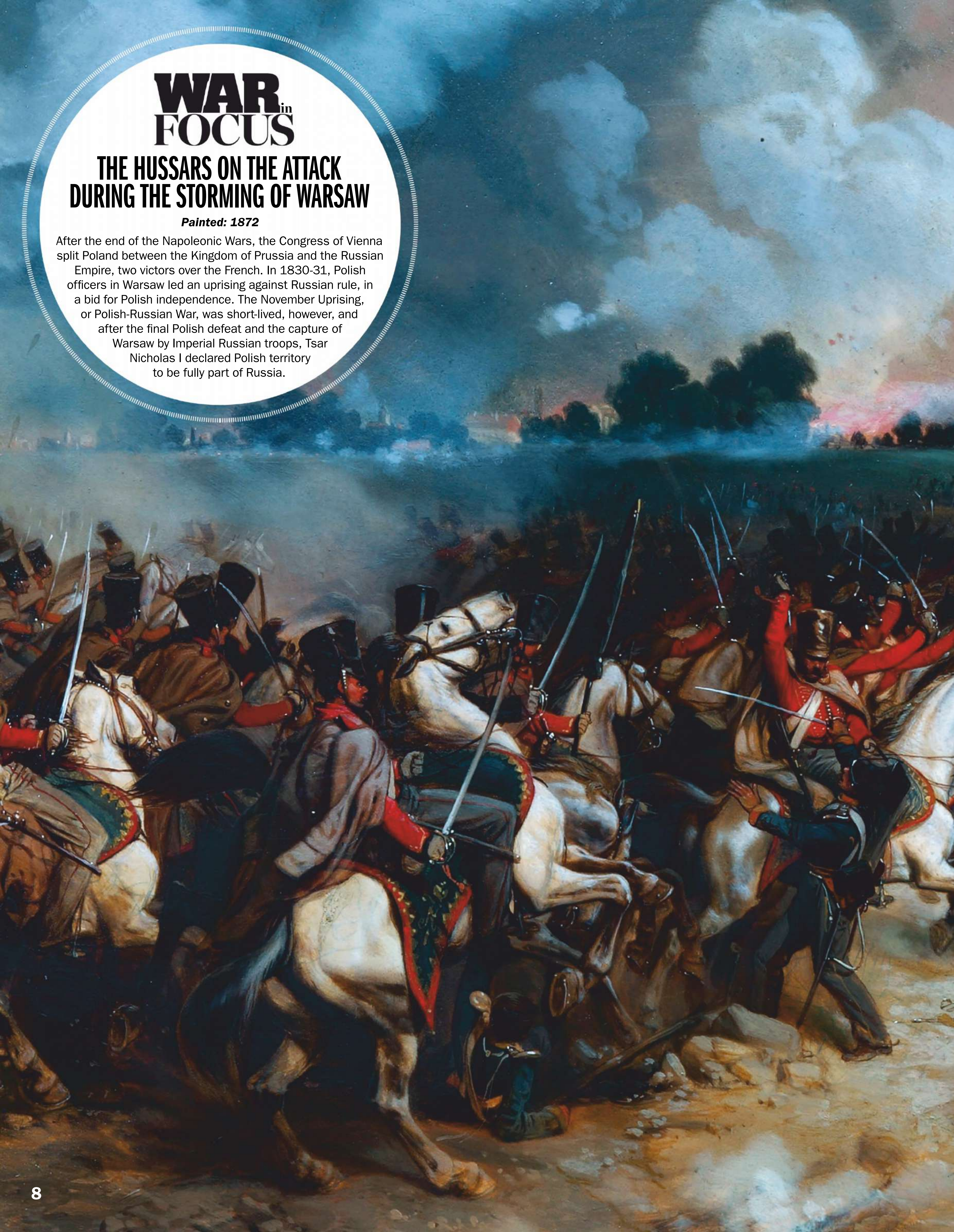
Taken: c.January-February 1941

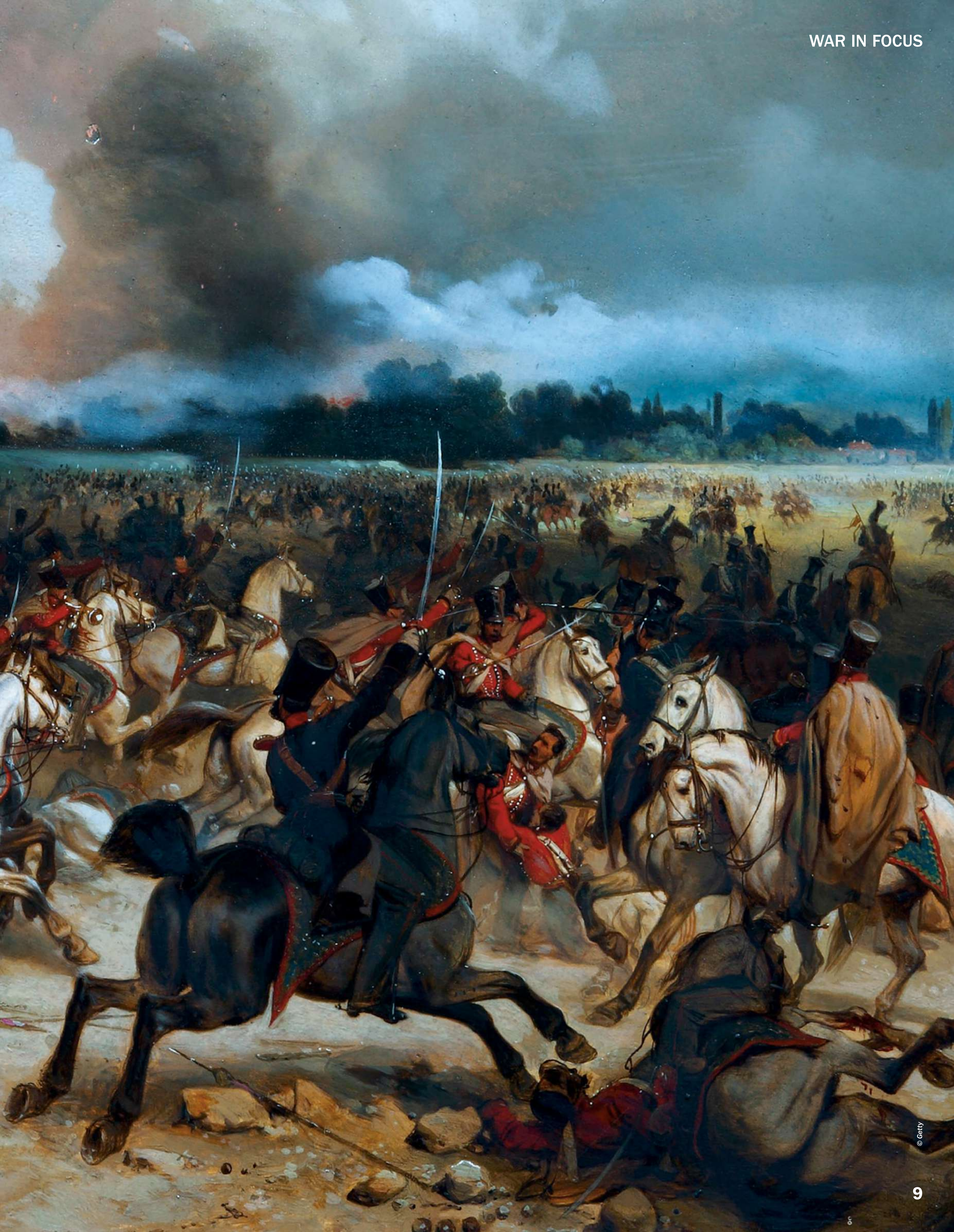
In a London pub, Australian soldiers drink to the recent victories of their countrymen and allies in North Africa, the board behind them listing the towns captured in Egypt and Libya during Operation Compass. This photograph was likely taken before the capture of Benghazi, a key port in Libya, which fell to the Allies on 7 February. The offensive ended on 9 February after the capture of El Agheila, Libya. This preceded the transfer of Allied troops to Greece to fend off the invasion there, but also the Italian-German counterattack, which would prove devastating to almost all the Allied gains made during Compass.

THE HUSSARS ON THE ATTACK DURING THE STORMING OF WARSAW

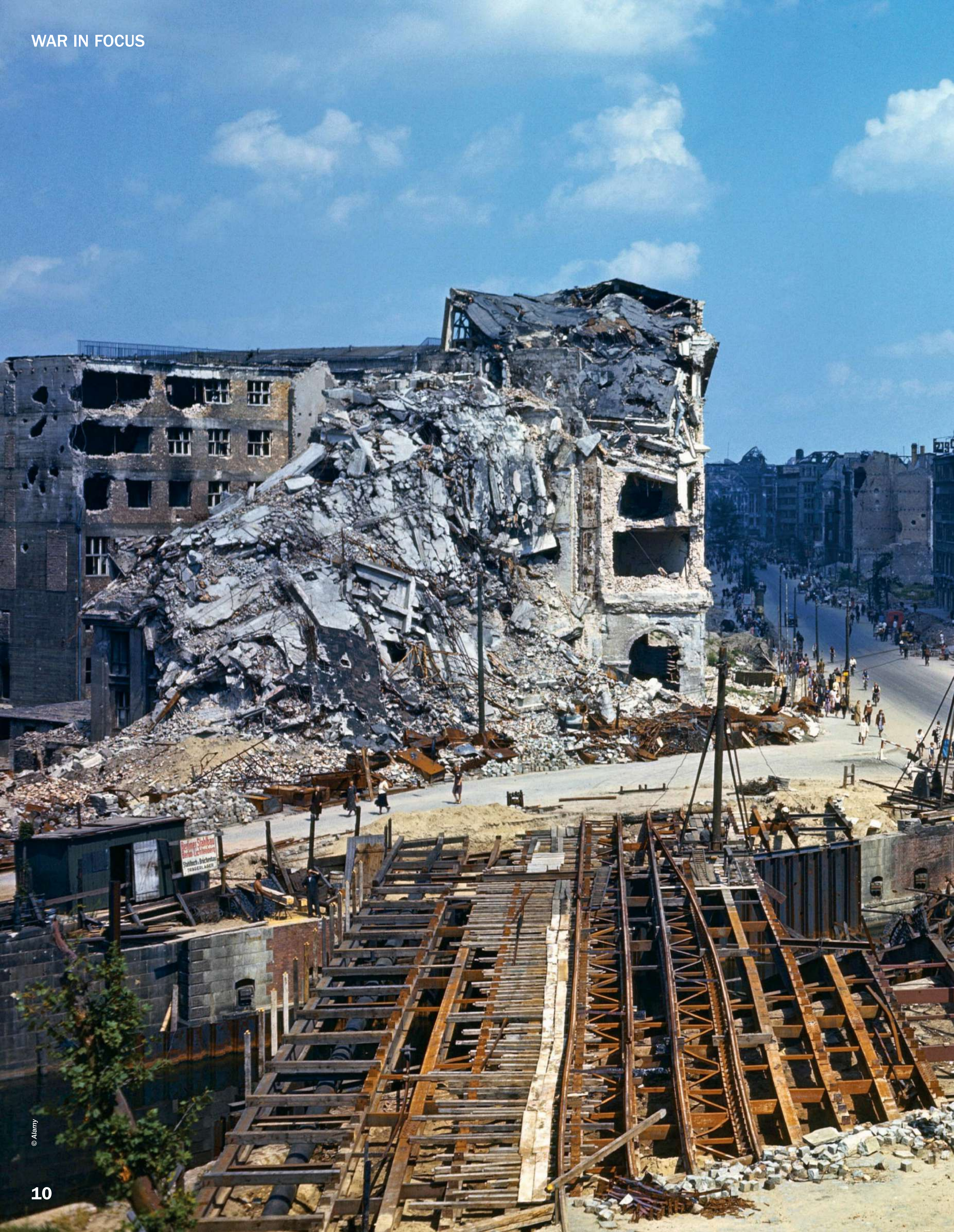
Painted: 1872

After the end of the Napoleonic Wars, the Congress of Vienna split Poland between the Kingdom of Prussia and the Russian Empire, two victors over the French. In 1830-31, Polish officers in Warsaw led an uprising against Russian rule, in a bid for Polish independence. The November Uprising, or Polish-Russian War, was short-lived, however, and after the final Polish defeat and the capture of Warsaw by Imperial Russian troops, Tsar Nicholas I declared Polish territory to be fully part of Russia.

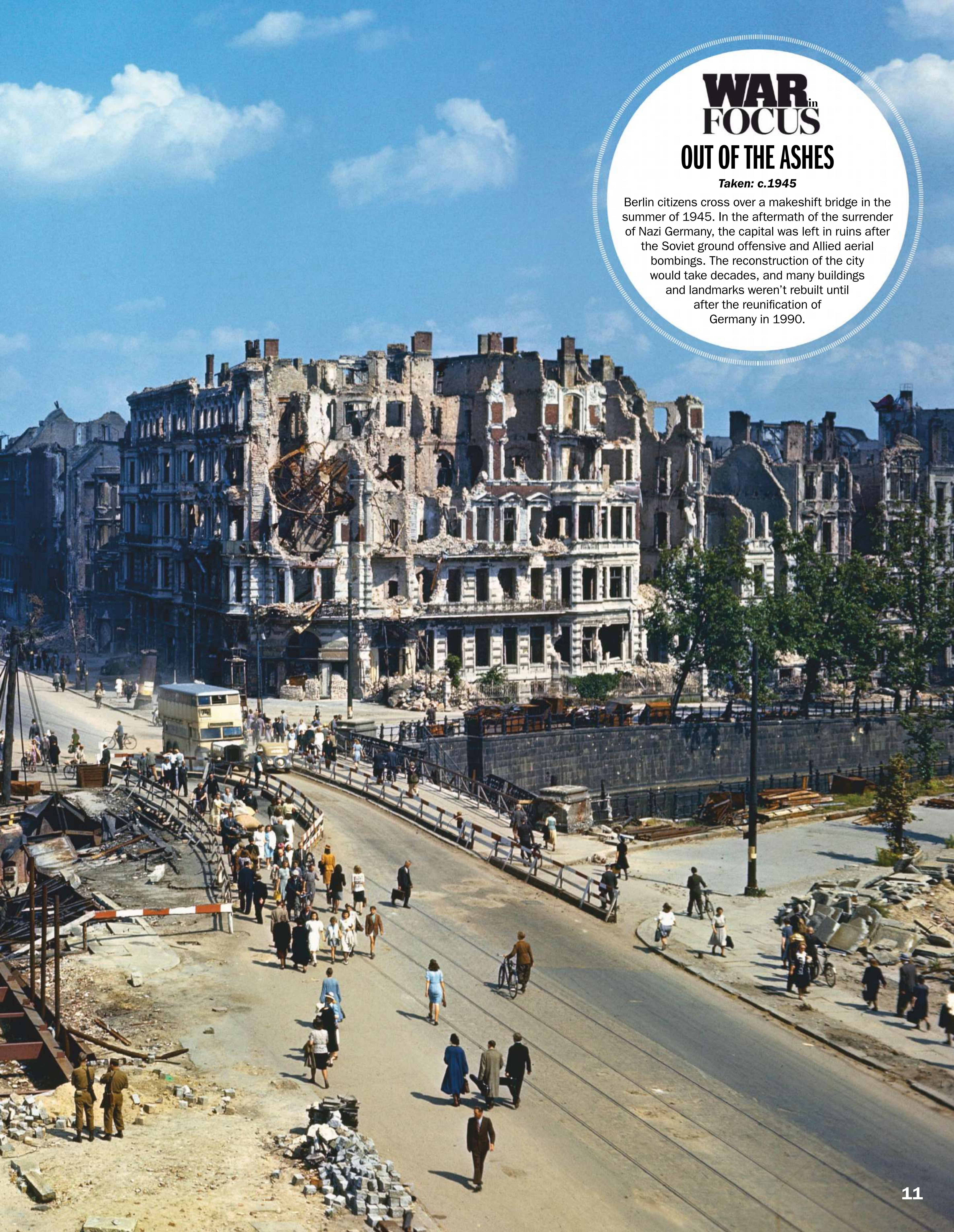




© Getty


Berliner Stahlbau
Berlin-Lichtenberg
Stahlhoch u. Brückenbau
TRÄGERLAGER

© Alamy



WAR in FOCUS

OUT OF THE ASHES

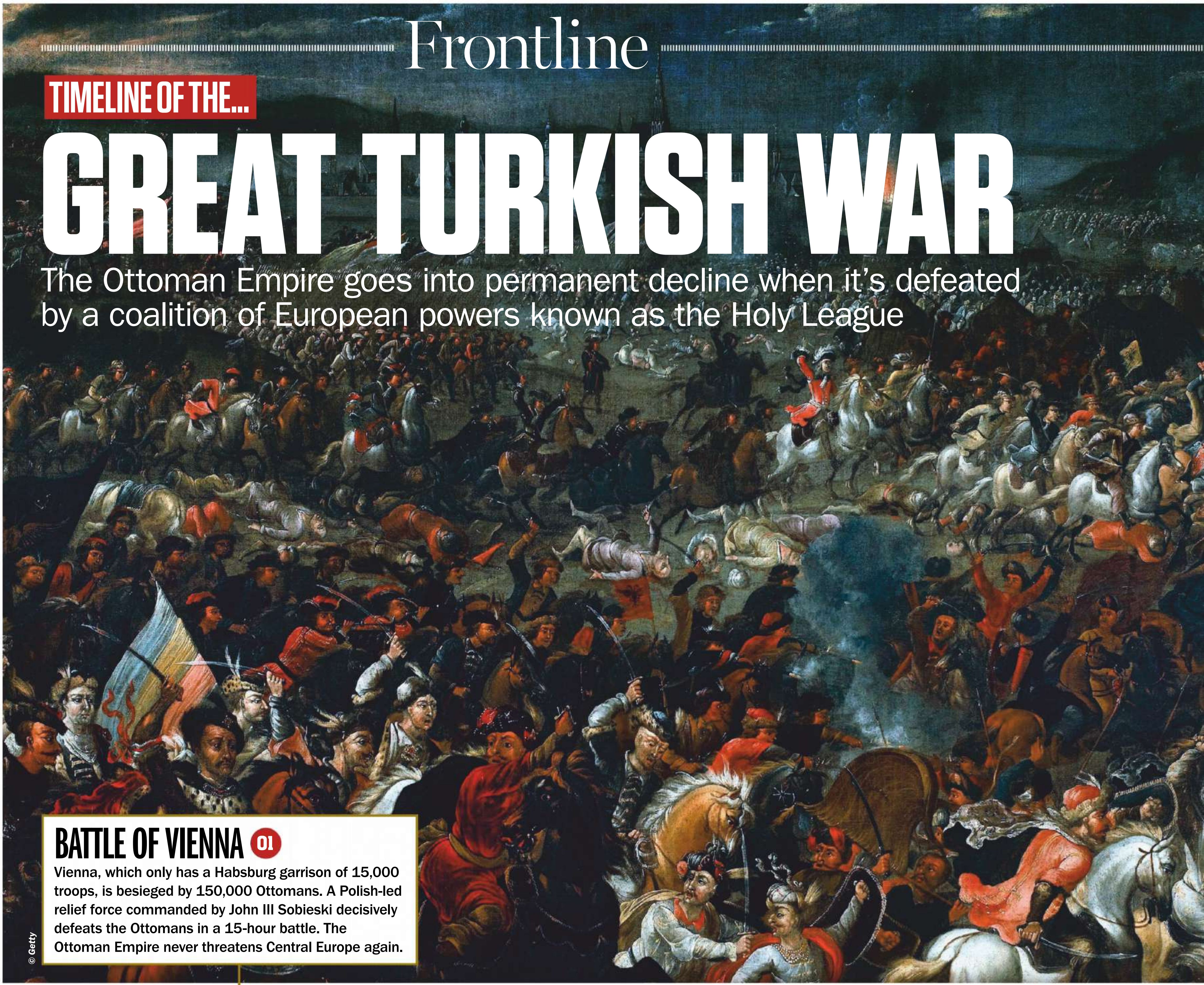
Taken: c.1945

Berlin citizens cross over a makeshift bridge in the summer of 1945. In the aftermath of the surrender of Nazi Germany, the capital was left in ruins after the Soviet ground offensive and Allied aerial bombings. The reconstruction of the city would take decades, and many buildings and landmarks weren't rebuilt until after the reunification of Germany in 1990.

TIMELINE OF THE...

GREAT TURKISH WAR

The Ottoman Empire goes into permanent decline when it's defeated by a coalition of European powers known as the Holy League



© Getty

12 September 1683

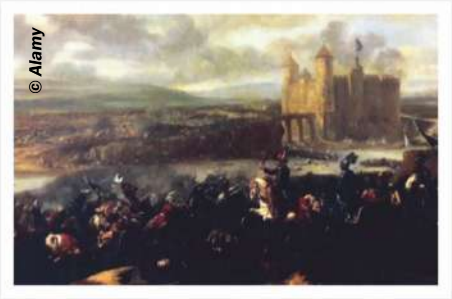
BATTLE OF VIENNA 01

Vienna, which only has a Habsburg garrison of 15,000 troops, is besieged by 150,000 Ottomans. A Polish-led relief force commanded by John III Sobieski decisively defeats the Ottomans in a 15-hour battle. The Ottoman Empire never threatens Central Europe again.

Late-17th century

IMPERIAL TENSIONS

The Habsburg Holy Roman Empire and Ottoman Empire compete for control of the Balkans and neighbouring territories. The Ottomans in particular want to expand westwards and achieve their long-held strategic ambition to capture the Habsburg capital of Vienna. Meanwhile, the Russians and Polish-Lithuania Commonwealth plan to take Ottoman territory on the northern Black Sea coast.



© Alamy

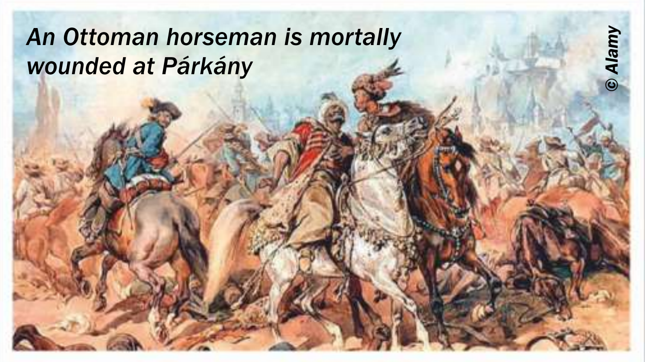
The 1673 Battle of Khotyn against the Ottomans is one of the many clashes that lead to the Great Turkish War

7-9 October 1683

BATTLE OF PÁRKÁNY 02

A coalition of the Habsburgs and Poland-Lithuania pursue part of the defeated Ottoman force after Vienna. John III Sobieski's Polish cavalry are beaten by the Ottomans, who are in turn defeated by Imperial reinforcements led by Charles V, Duke of Lorraine. Imperial forces go on to capture Ottoman territory in Hungary.

An Ottoman horseman is mortally wounded at Párkány



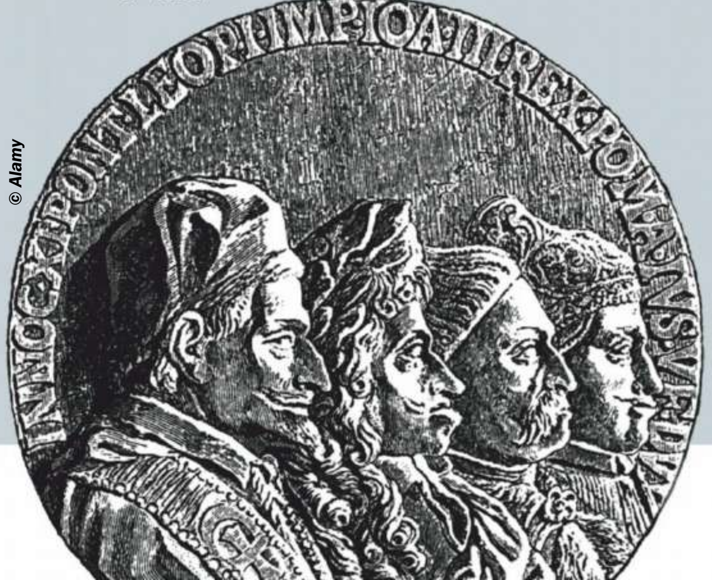
© Alamy

1684

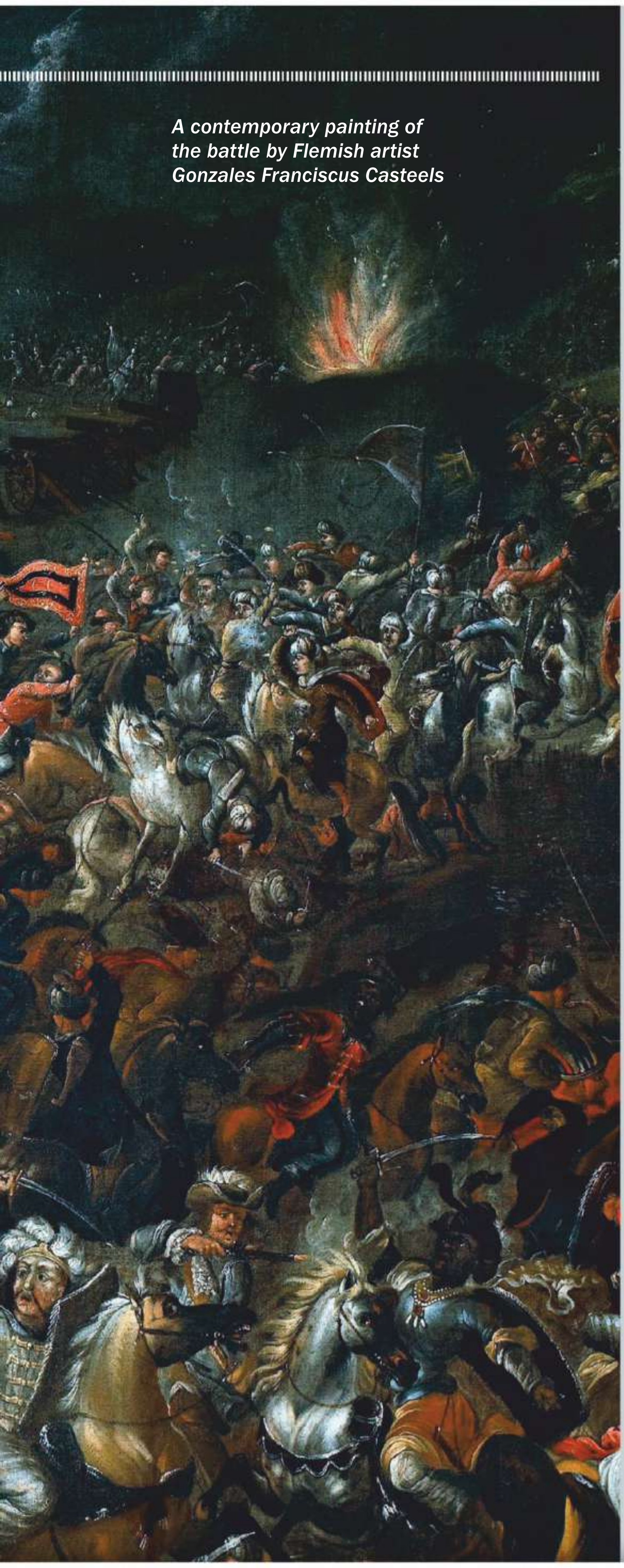
THE HOLY LEAGUE

Pope Innocent XI initiates a new alliance of the Holy Roman Empire, Poland-Lithuania and the Venetian Republic. Their aim is to prevent further Ottoman expansion into Europe. Russia later joins the Holy League in 1686.

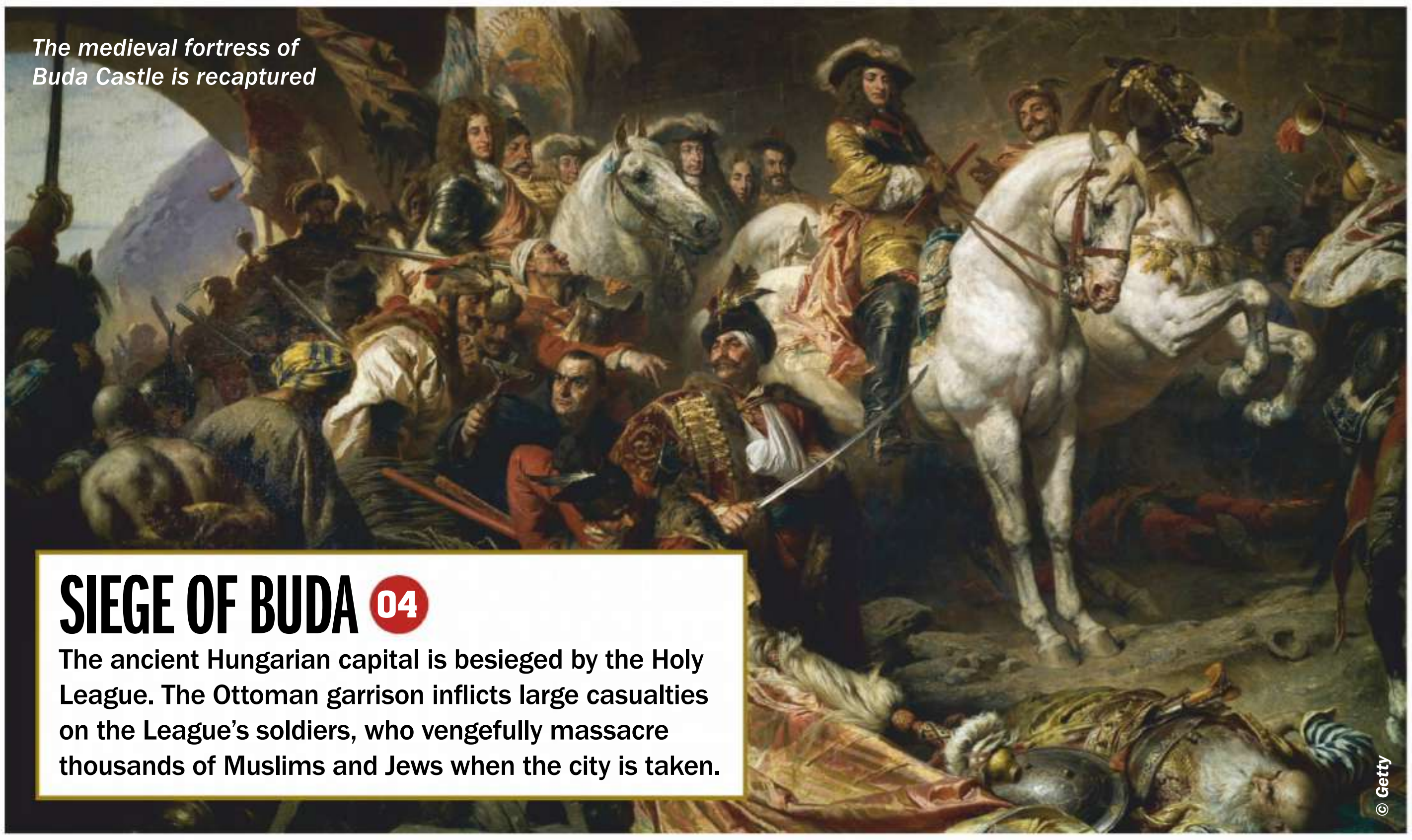
An engraving of a coin that depicts the four main leaders of the Holy League, including Tsar Peter the Great of Russia



© Alamy



A contemporary painting of the battle by Flemish artist Gonzales Franciscus Casteels



The medieval fortress of Buda Castle is recaptured

© Getty

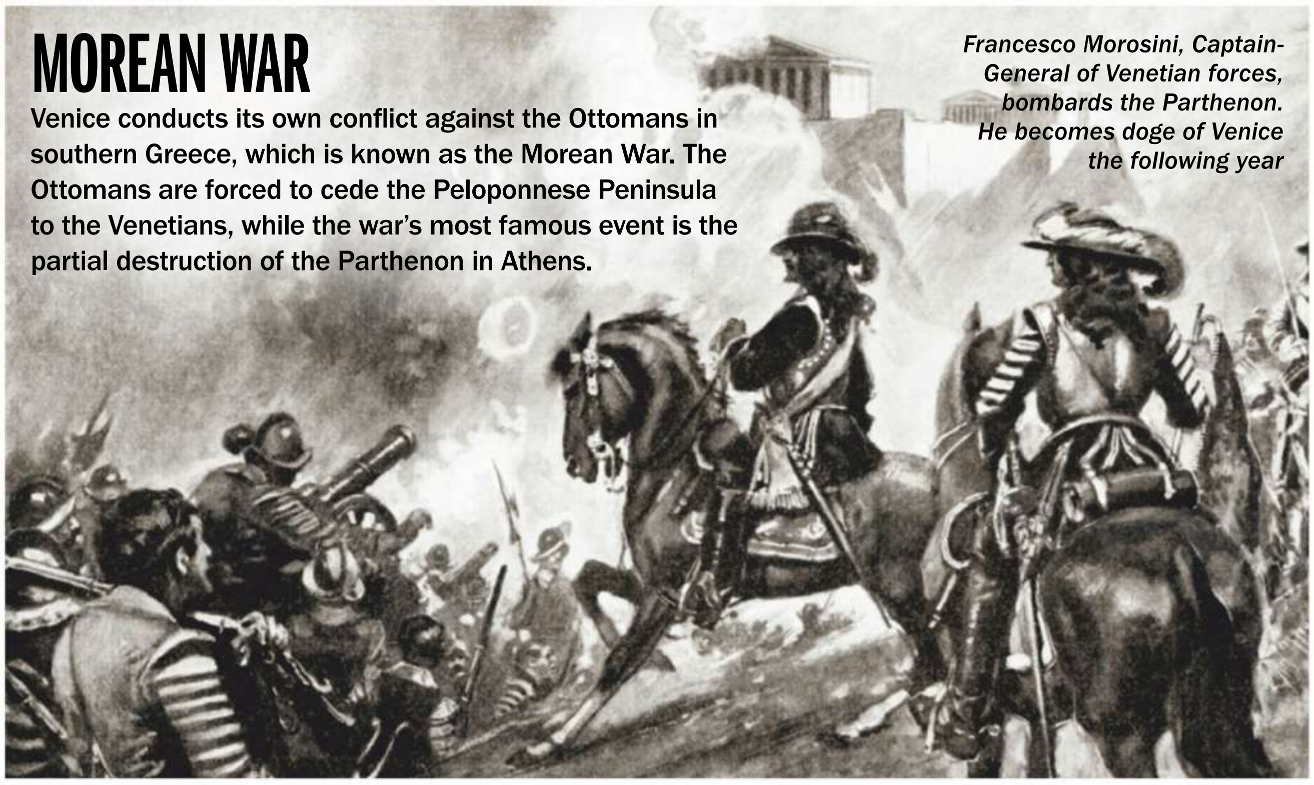
SIEGE OF BUDA 04

The ancient Hungarian capital is besieged by the Holy League. The Ottoman garrison inflicts large casualties on the League's soldiers, who vengefully massacre thousands of Muslims and Jews when the city is taken.

18 June-9 September 1686

MOREAN WAR

Venice conducts its own conflict against the Ottomans in southern Greece, which is known as the Morean War. The Ottomans are forced to cede the Peloponnese Peninsula to the Venetians, while the war's most famous event is the partial destruction of the Parthenon in Athens.



Francesco Morosini, Captain-General of Venetian forces, bombards the Parthenon. He becomes doge of Venice the following year

© Alamy

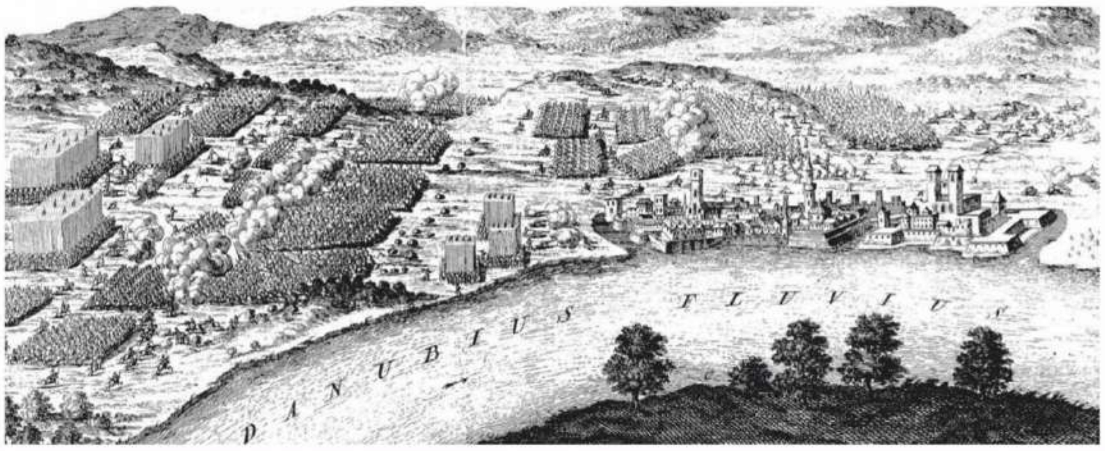
1687-88

27 June 1684

BATTLE OF VÁC 03

Charles V, Duke of Lorraine leads a numerically superior Imperial force of 43,000 men against 18,000 Ottoman troops. With the loss of just 200 men, Charles' forces defeat the Ottomans and inflict approximately 2,000 casualties.

A late-17th century engraving depicting the Battle of Vác

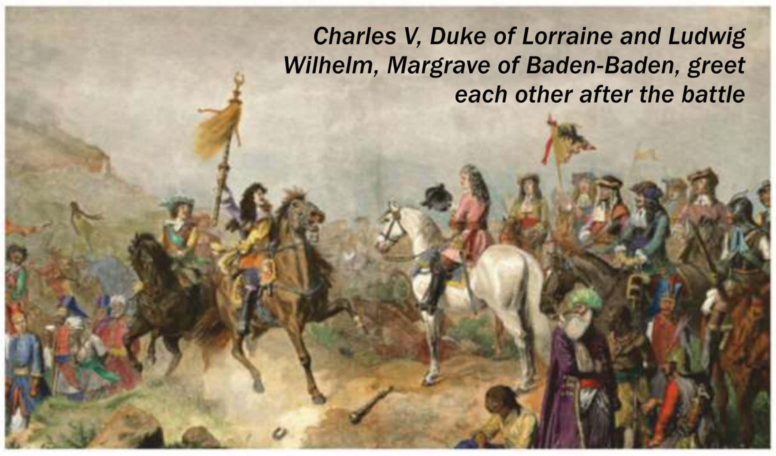


© Alamy

12 August 1687

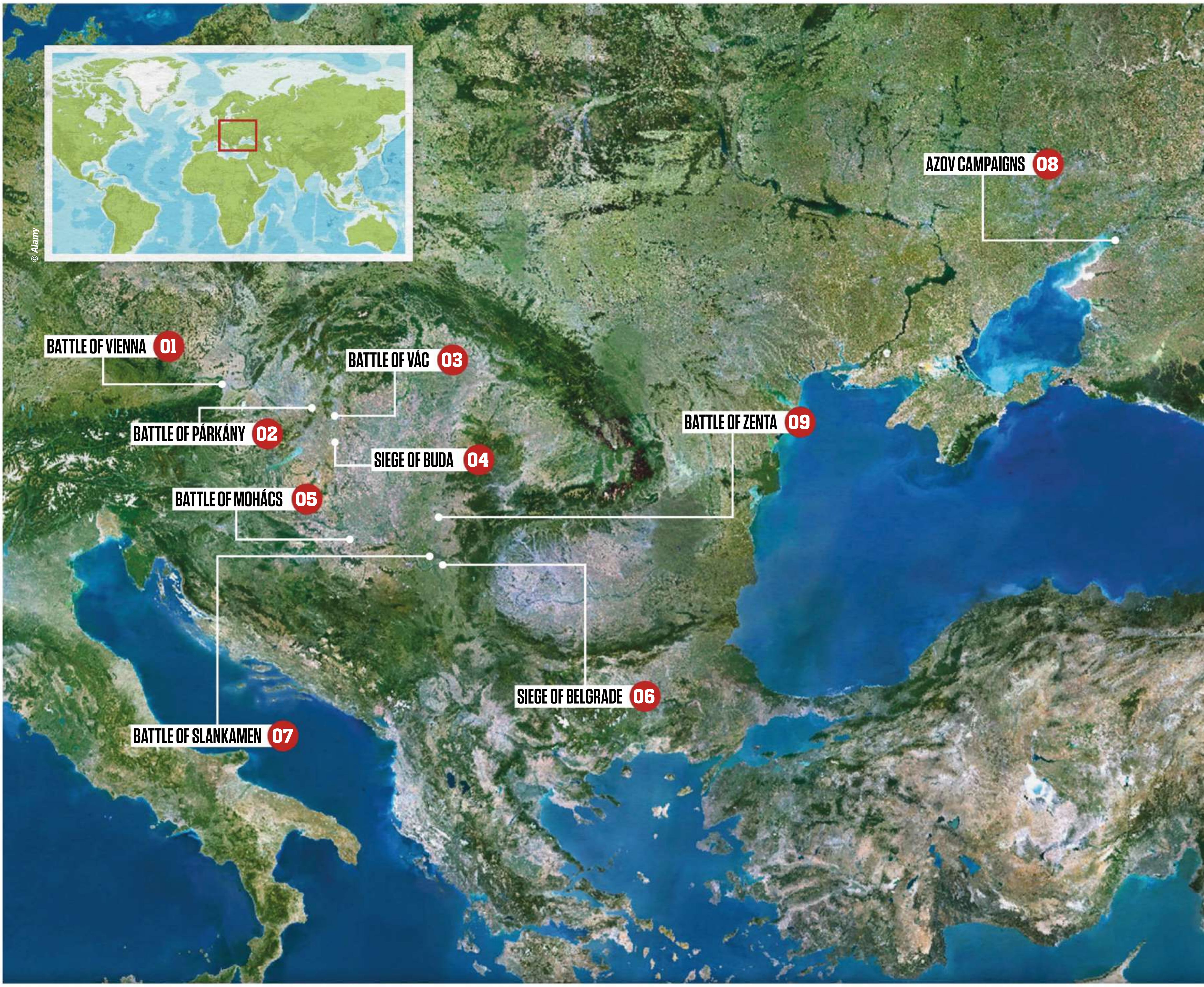
BATTLE OF MOHÁCS 05

Sari Süleyman Pasha's Ottoman forces are routed by the Holy League. Pasha subsequently flees from his own mutinous troops and the disintegration of Ottoman forces enables the full Habsburg conquest of Hungary and Transylvania.



Charles V, Duke of Lorraine and Ludwig Wilhelm, Margrave of Baden-Baden, greet each other after the battle

© Alamy

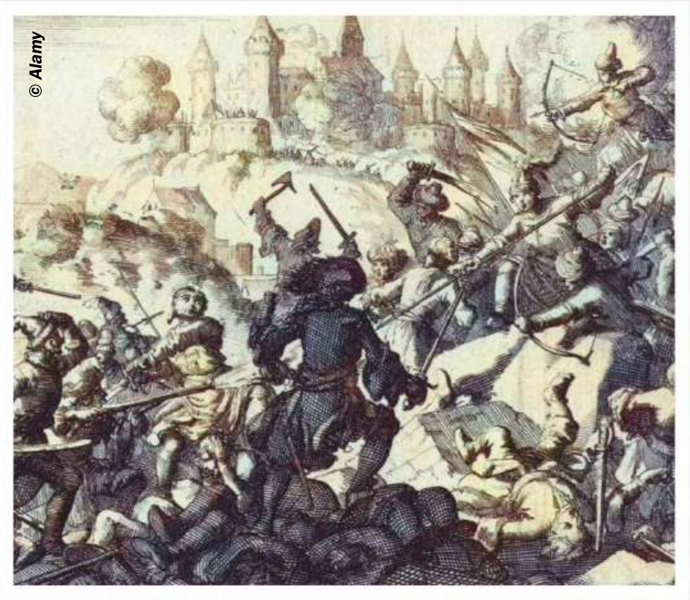

AZOV CAMPAIGNS 08
BATTLE OF VIENNA 01
BATTLE OF VÁC 03
BATTLE OF PÁRKÁNY 02
BATTLE OF ZENTA 09
SIEGE OF BUDA 04
BATTLE OF MOHÁCS 05
SIEGE OF BELGRADE 06
BATTLE OF SLANKAMEN 07

© Alamy

30 July-6 September 1688

SIEGE OF BELGRADE 06

Belgrade is one of the most formidable Ottoman strongholds in Europe when it's besieged by a Holy League force commanded by Maximilian II Emanuel, Elector of Bavaria. The city is bombarded by cannon fire for over a month before Maximilian and Prince Eugene of Savoy personally lead a bloody but successful assault against the garrison.



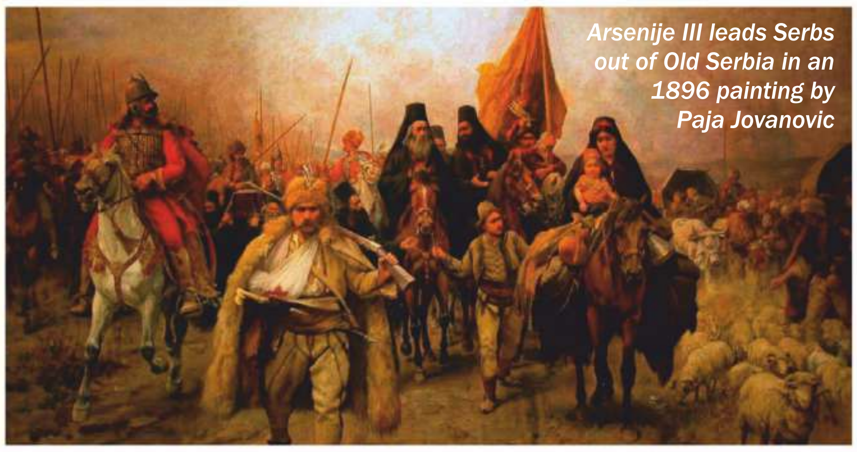
© Alamy

Ottoman and Holy League troops participate in fierce hand-to-hand combat with the citadel of Belgrade in the background

1690-91

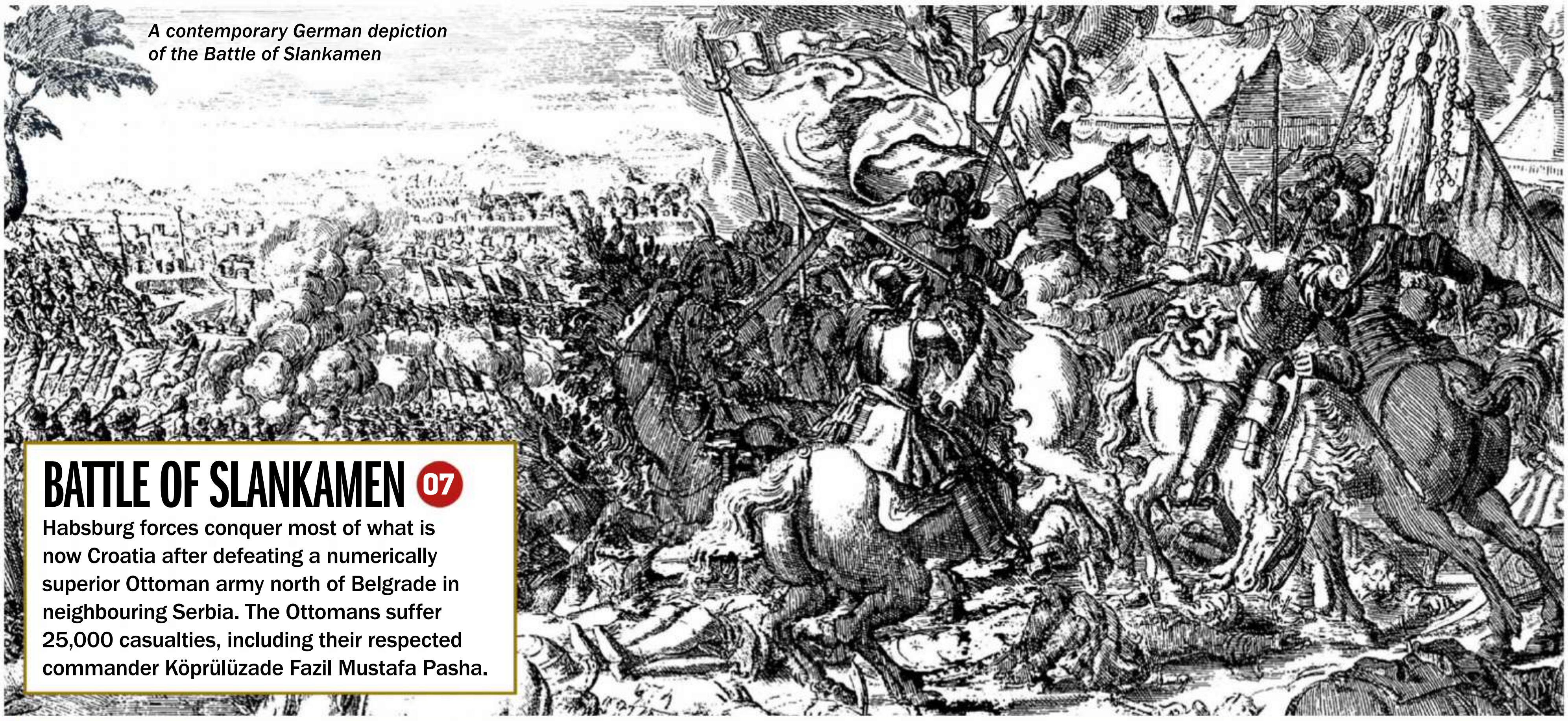
GREAT SERB MIGRATION

Orthodox Patriarch Arsenije III Crnojevic leads Serbs from their homeland into Habsburg territory when Ottoman forces reoccupy Kosovo and southern Serbian regions. Most immigrating Serbs settle in Slavonia and Hungary.



Arsenije III leads Serbs out of Old Serbia in an 1896 painting by Paja Jovanovic

© Alamy



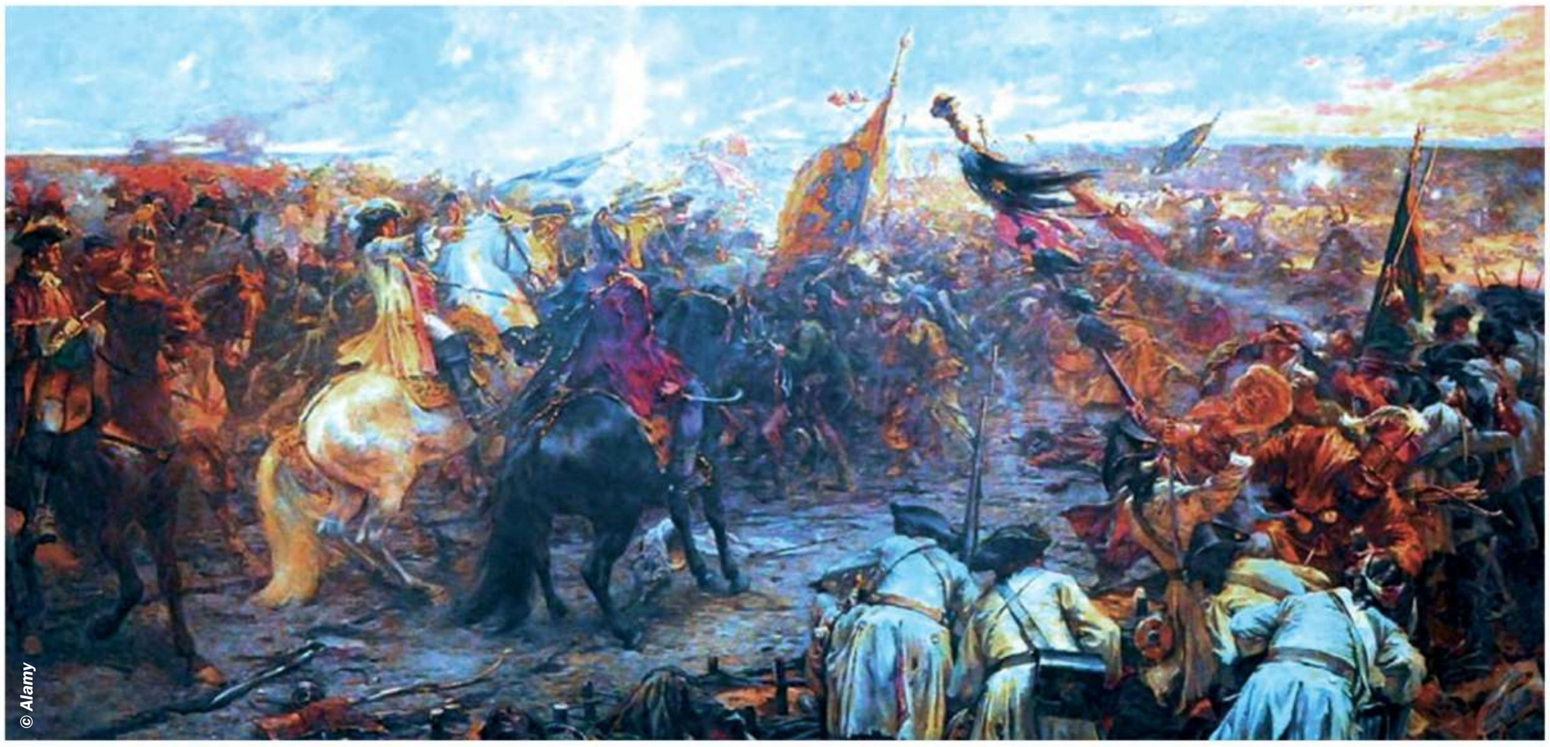
A contemporary German depiction of the Battle of Slankamen

© Alamy

BATTLE OF SLANKAMEN 07

19 August 1691

Habsburg forces conquer most of what is now Croatia after defeating a numerically superior Ottoman army north of Belgrade in neighbouring Serbia. The Ottomans suffer 25,000 casualties, including their respected commander Köprülüzade Fazil Mustafa Pasha.



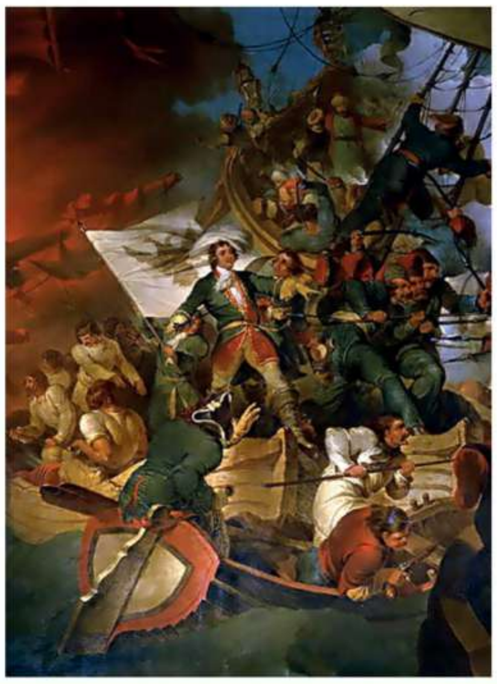
© Alamy

BATTLE OF ZENTA 09

11 September 1697

A force of 75,000-100,000 Ottoman troops commanded by Sultan Mustafa II is defeated by the Holy League in the most decisive battle of the war. The League only suffers 429 fatalities compared to 30,000 Ottoman casualties.

This 1896 painting of the Battle of Zenta by Austro-Hungarian artist Franz Eisenhut is commissioned to celebrate 1,000 years since the Hungarian settlement of the Great Hungarian Plain



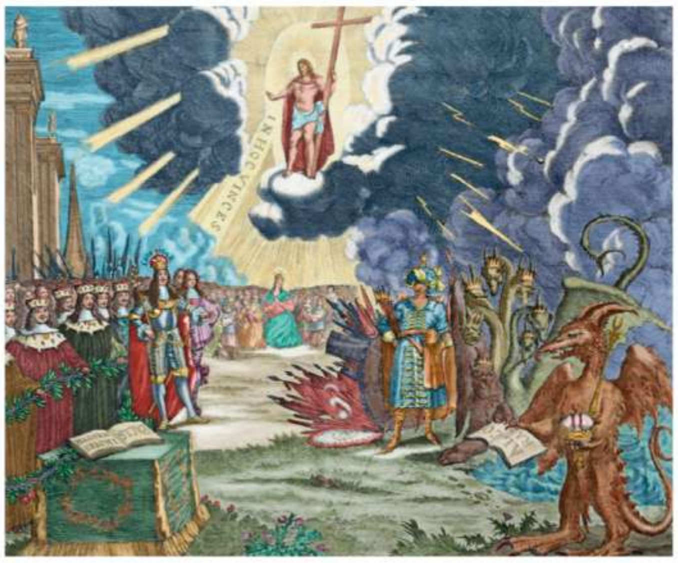
© Alamy

AZOV CAMPAIGNS 08

1695-96

Tsar Peter the Great of Russia launches two campaigns to capture the Ottoman fortress of Azov. The first campaign is unsuccessful but Azov falls in July 1696 after a massive bombardment from land and sea. With new access to the Azov Sea and Black Sea, Russia becomes a maritime power.

Peter the Great depicted in the thick of the fighting during the final battle for Azov



A propaganda engraving commemorating Holy League victory over the Ottoman Empire with a heavy emphasis on divine intervention

© Getty

TREATY OF KARLOWITZ

26 January 1699

Zenta forces the Ottomans to begin peace negotiations to end the war. They retain control of the recaptured Belgrade as well as parts of modern Romania and Moldova. However, the Holy League gains control of Hungary, Transylvania, Croatia and Slavonia for the Habsburgs. Ottoman dominance in Europe is ended.

LEADERS & COMMANDERS

Drawn from across Europe and the Ottoman Empire, the leaders of the Great Turkish War were diverse and often extremely ruthless

FRANCESCO MOROSINI

A FUTURE DOGE OF VENICE WHO CONQUERED MOREA

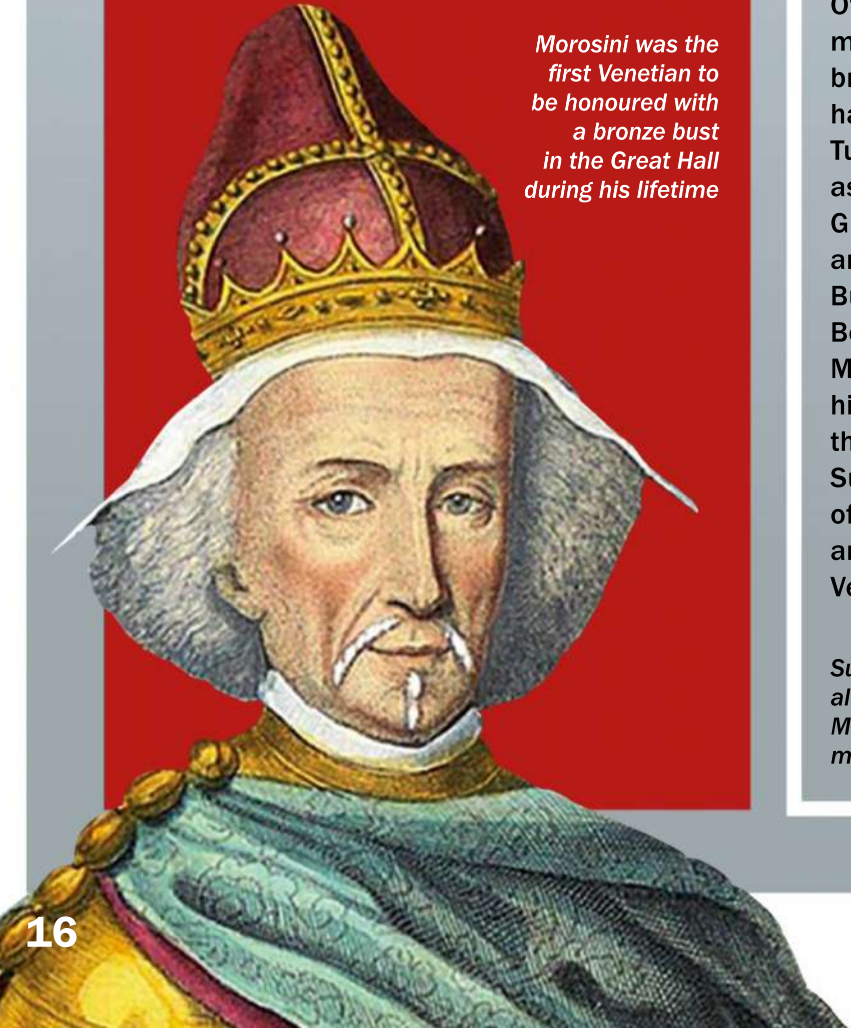
1619-94 **VENICE**

Born of a noble Venetian family, Francesco Morosini made his name as a commander during the Cretan War of 1645-69. Although initially successful during this campaign, he was forced to withdrew and return to Venice in defeat. He was accused of treason and put on trial, but later cleared his name.

Following the outbreak of the Great Turkish War in 1683, he was put in command of a new Venetian force sent to reclaim former Venetian territories that had come under Ottoman rule. His campaign in Morea initially proved successful, capturing Morea and territories in Western Greece. Morosini even captured Athens, however he was unable to hold it for long.

This success led to him receiving the viceroy title of Peloponnesiacus and he became the first Venetian citizen to be honoured with a bronze bust in the Great Hall during his lifetime. In 1688 he was made Doge of Venice, but his success turned to failure following several defeats later in the war.

Morosini died in 1694, aged 74. He was honoured with a large marble arch at the Doge's Palace, while his cat, which always accompanied him into battle, was embalmed and placed in the Museo Correr.



Morosini was the first Venetian to be honoured with a bronze bust in the Great Hall during his lifetime

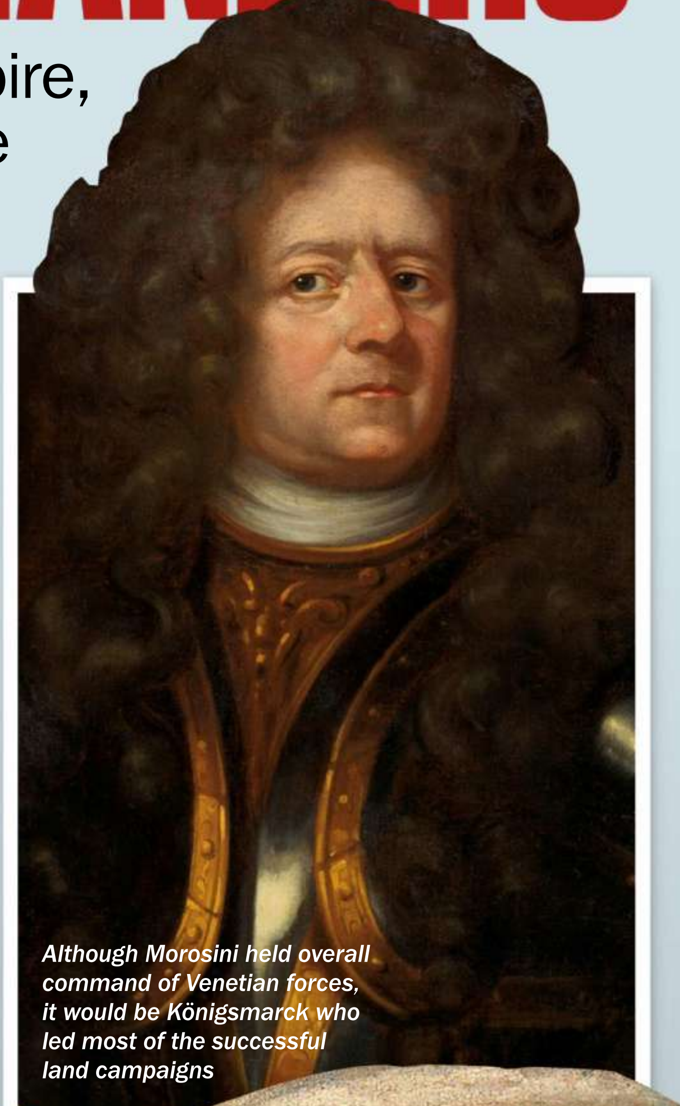
OTTO WILHELM KÖNIGSMARCK

SWEDISH GENERAL WHO LED THE VENETIAN MILITARY CONQUEST OF MOREA

1639-88 **SWEDEN**

Although Swedish, Otto Wilhelm Königsmarck was born in Minden, Northern Germany, where his mother had been accompanying his father on military campaigns. Following these campaigns, the family resided in Stade, where Königsmarck was privately educated before attending the University of Jena. He later undertook the Grand Tour, visiting many places in Europe.

Following in his father's footsteps, Königsmarck became a military man and rose to the rank of Field Marshall, commanding Swedish forces at the Battle of Stralsund in 1678 during the Scanian War. He became the Governor of Swedish Pomerania in 1679. Königsmarck would later join Francesco Morosini during the Morean War, commanding Venetian land forces until his death from the plague in 1688.



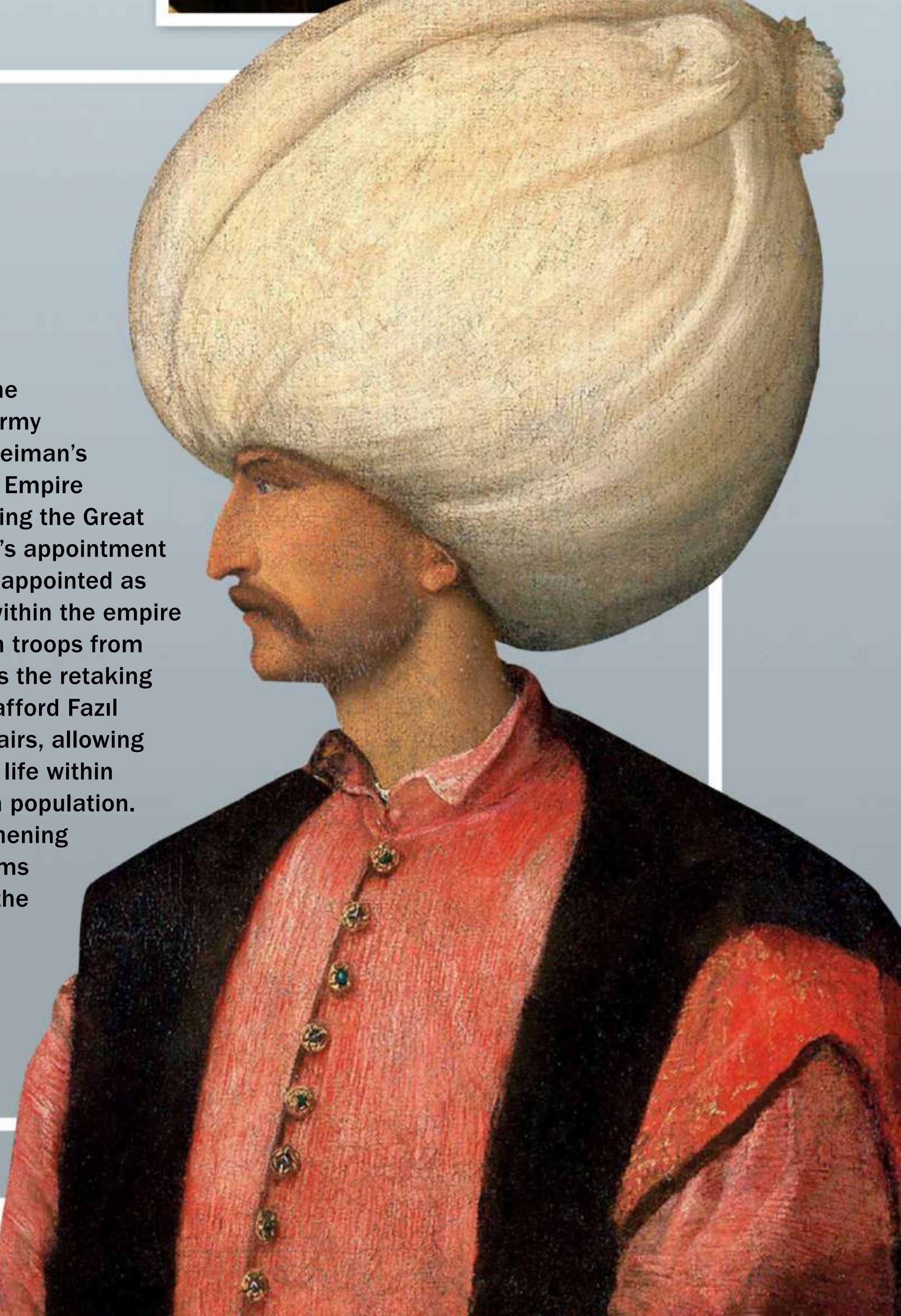
Although Morosini held overall command of Venetian forces, it would be Königsmarck who led most of the successful land campaigns

SULEIMAN II

REFORMING SULTAN WHO RECONQUERED TERRITORY LOST TO THE VENETIANS

1642-91 **CONSTANTINOPLE (TURKEY)**

Suleiman II came to the throne of the Ottoman Empire through a violent army mutiny, during which the Sultan, Suleiman's brother, was deposed. The Ottoman Empire had suffered a series of defeats during the Great Turkish War, but following Suleiman's appointment as Sultan, Fazıl Mustafa Pasha was appointed as Grand Vizier. He established order within the empire and saw to the expulsion of Austrian troops from Bulgaria and Transylvania, as well as the retaking Belgrade in 1690. Suleiman would afford Fazıl Mustafa a free hand in Ottoman affairs, allowing him to reduce taxation and improve life within the empire for the Sultan's Christian population. Suleiman's reforms led to a strengthening of the empire through internal reforms and reconquests of territory lost to the Venetians and others.



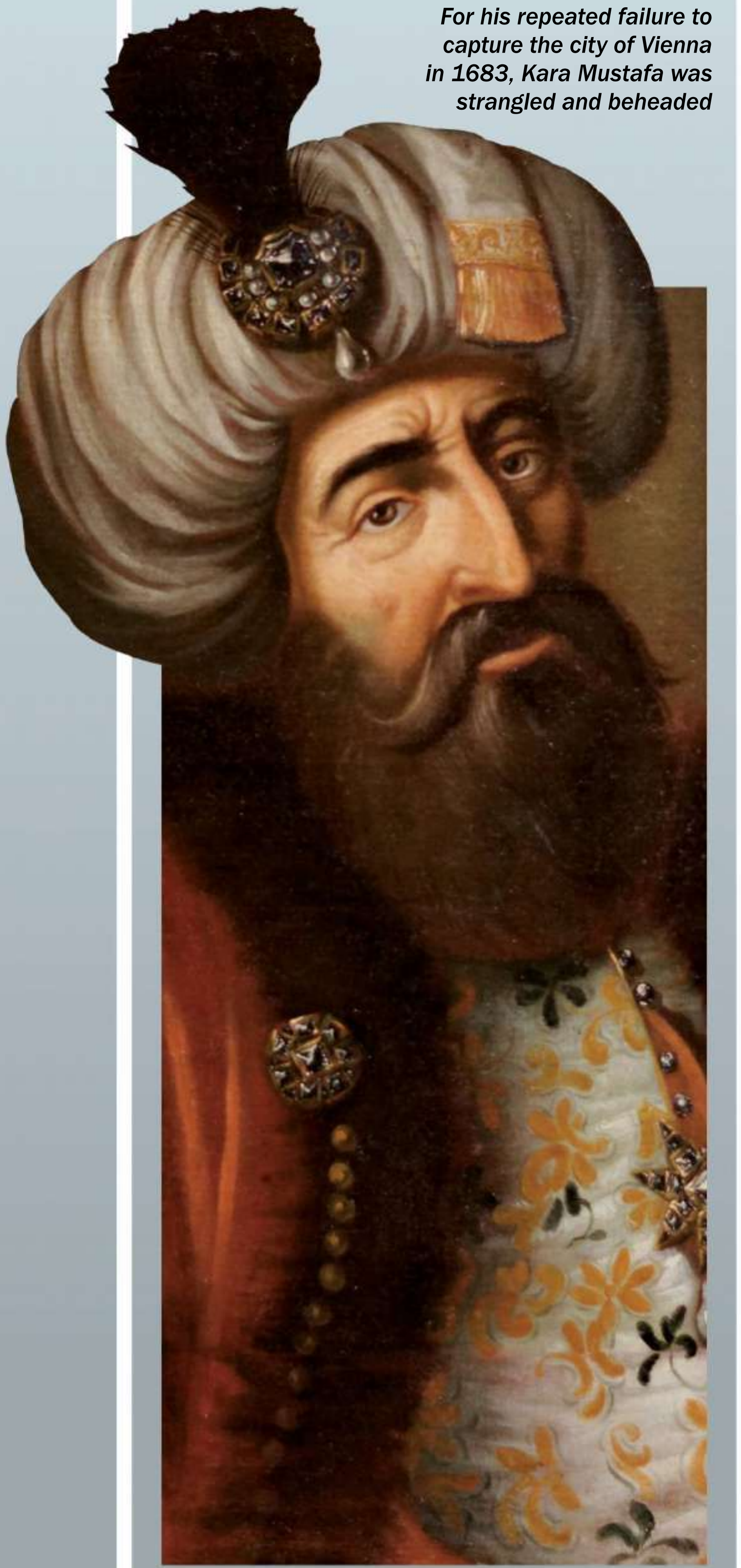
Suleiman II's great strength was allowing his Grand Vizier, Fazıl Mustafa Pasha, a free hand in managing the Ottoman Empire

KARA MUSTAFA PASHA

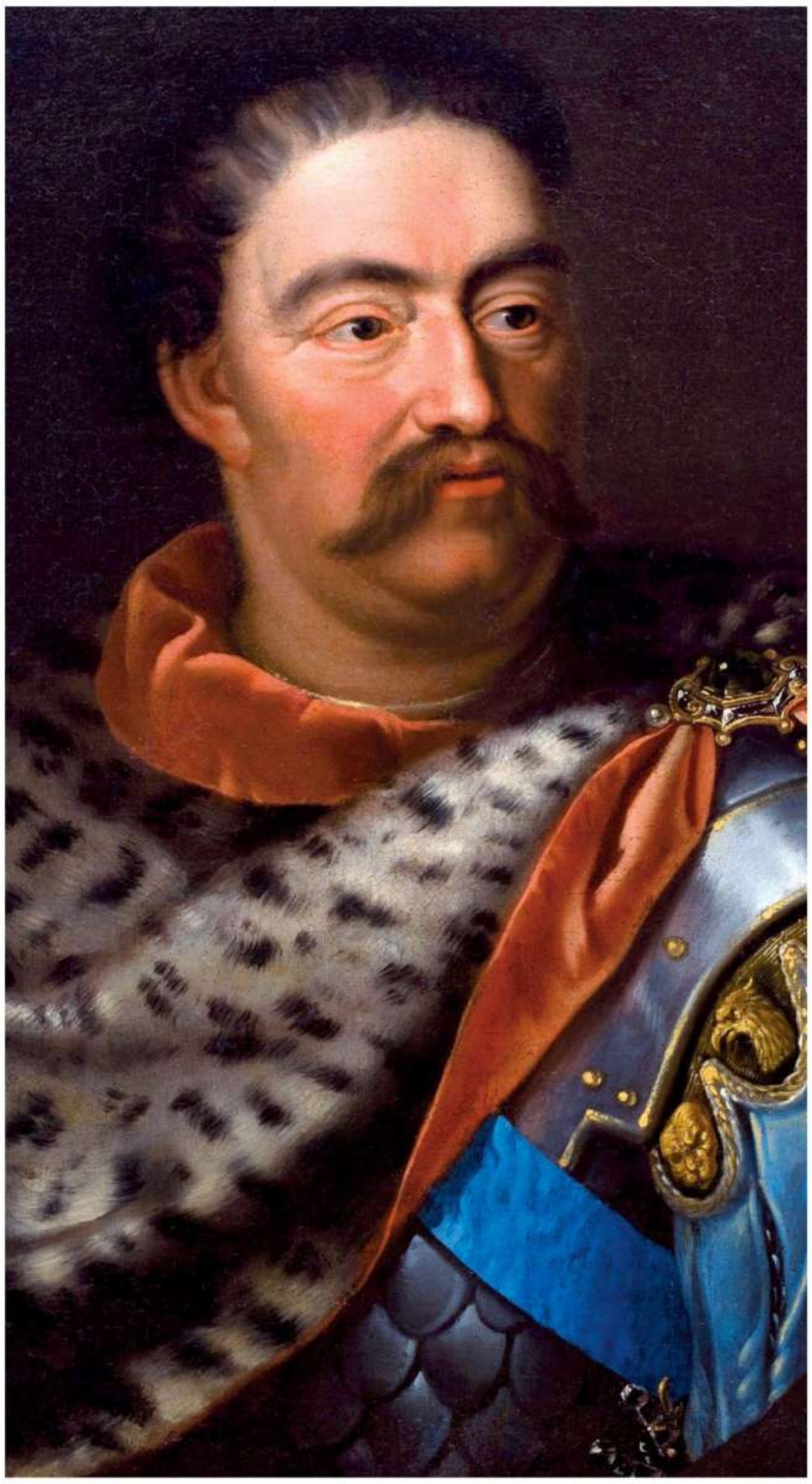
OTTOMAN GRAND VIZIER WHO ATTEMPTED THE DEFEAT OF VIENNA

1634-83 **MERZIFON**

Born at Merzifon in the Ottoman Empire (modern-day Turkey), Kara Mustafa Pasha held several senior appointments during his brother-in-law's Grand Vizierate, including Captain of the Fleet, Vizier in the State Council, and Deputy Grand Vizier. He later succeeded Fazıl Ahmed Pasha as Grand Vizier but led a number of ultimately unsuccessful military campaigns against Poland and Russia. During the Great Turkish War, Kara Mustafa commanded an Ottoman army at the Siege of Vienna in July-September 1683 but was heavily defeated by an Austrian-Polish army led by John III Sobieski, the King of Poland. Kara Mustafa would be executed by strangulation and beheading in Belgrade on orders of the Sultan. His head was delivered to the Ottoman leader on a silver dish.



For his repeated failure to capture the city of Vienna in 1683, Kara Mustafa was strangled and beheaded



JOHN III SOBIESKI

KING OF POLAND AND 'SAVIOUR OF WESTERN CHRISTENDOM'

1629-96 **OLESKO (POLISH-LITHUANIAN COMMONWEALTH)**

Of Polish nobility, Sobieski was educated at Jagiellonian University before becoming a soldier, fighting in the Khmelnytsky Uprising, the Russo-Polish War, and the Deluge. An able military commander, he would quickly establish his name and become a prominent and popular figure in Polish and Lithuanian society. Upon the sudden death of King Michael, Sobieski was elected as King of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, reigning for 22 years. Perhaps his most noted feat of arms was the defeat of the Ottoman army under Kara Mustafa Pasha at the Battle of Vienna in 1683. His victory led to the Pope calling him the 'Saviour of Western Christendom'. At the age of 66, Sobieski died in 1696 following a period of ill-health. He was buried at Wawel Cathedral in Kraków.

Left: *Sobieski played a big role at the siege of Vienna in 1683, helping save the city from the Ottomans*

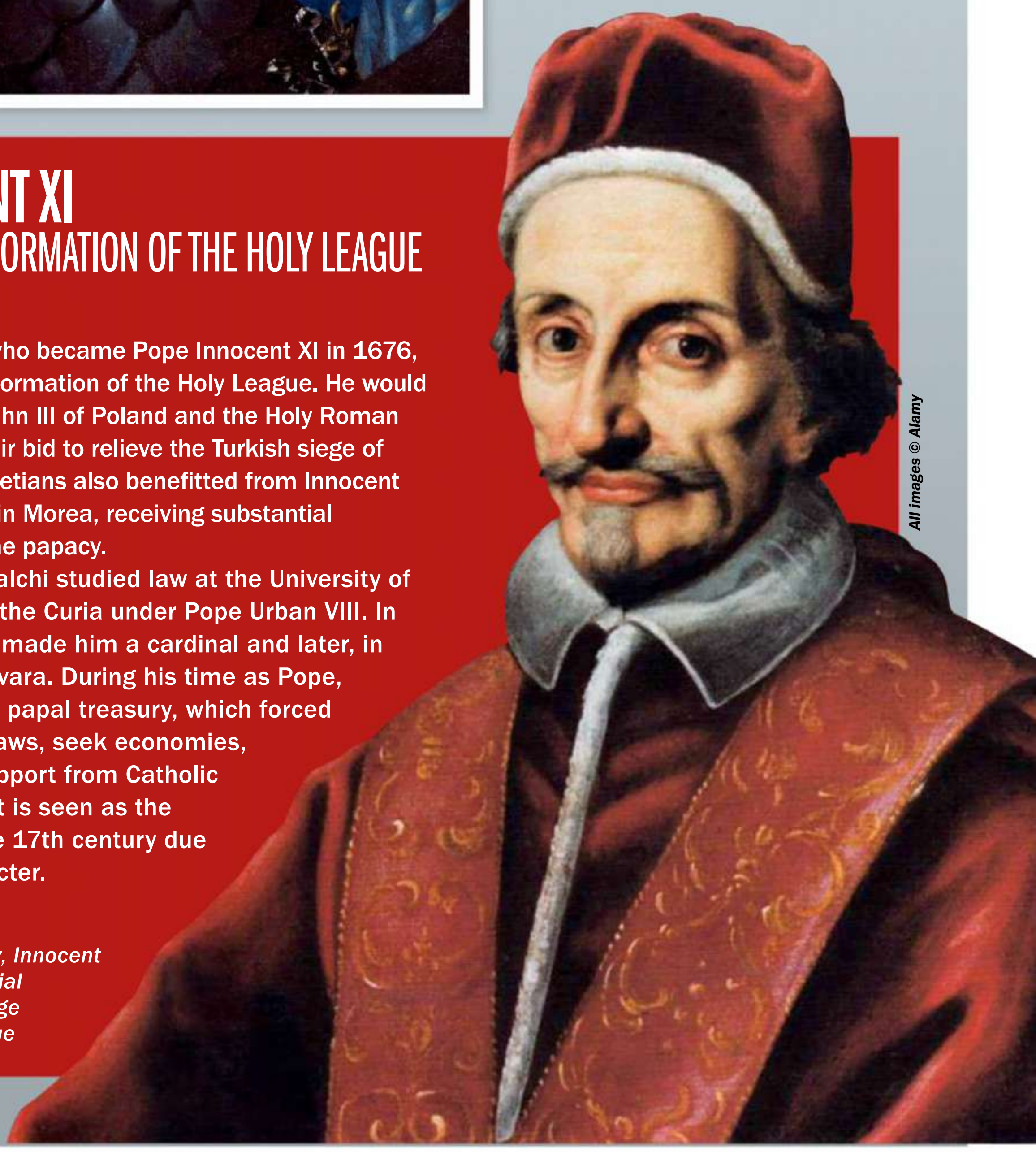
POPE INNOCENT XI

KEY FIGURE IN THE FORMATION OF THE HOLY LEAGUE

1611-89 **DUCHY OF MILAN**

Benedetto Odescalchi, who became Pope Innocent XI in 1676, was a vital figure in the formation of the Holy League. He would heavily subsidise King John III of Poland and the Holy Roman Emperor Leopold I in their bid to relieve the Turkish siege of Vienna in 1683. The Venetians also benefitted from Innocent XI's support in their war in Morea, receiving substantial financial support from the papacy.

Born in 1611, Odescalchi studied law at the University of Naples before entering the Curia under Pope Urban VIII. In 1645, Pope Innocent X made him a cardinal and later, in 1650, the Bishop of Novara. During his time as Pope, he inherited a bankrupt papal treasury, which forced him to revise taxation laws, seek economies, and secure financial support from Catholic powers. Today, Innocent is seen as the outstanding pope of the 17th century due to his high moral character.



Despite a bankrupt papacy, Innocent XI turned around its financial fortunes and became a huge influence in the Holy League

All images © Alamy

THE CRETAN WAR

Humiliation at the loss of Crete during the Cretan War of 1645-69 drove Venice to once again risk war with the Ottoman Empire

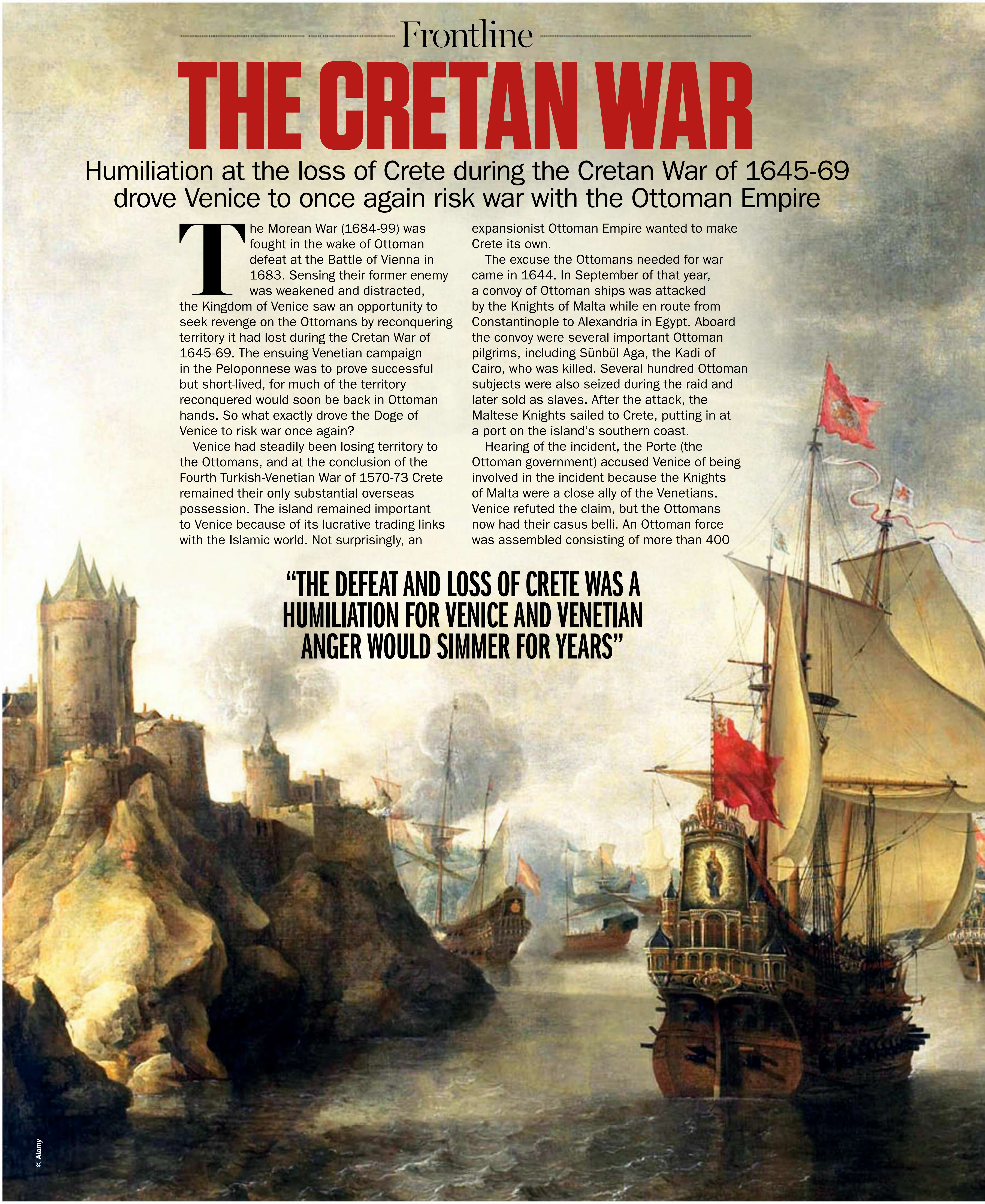
The Morean War (1684-99) was fought in the wake of Ottoman defeat at the Battle of Vienna in 1683. Sensing their former enemy was weakened and distracted, the Kingdom of Venice saw an opportunity to seek revenge on the Ottomans by reconquering territory it had lost during the Cretan War of 1645-69. The ensuing Venetian campaign in the Peloponnese was to prove successful but short-lived, for much of the territory reconquered would soon be back in Ottoman hands. So what exactly drove the Doge of Venice to risk war once again?

Venice had steadily been losing territory to the Ottomans, and at the conclusion of the Fourth Turkish-Venetian War of 1570-73 Crete remained their only substantial overseas possession. The island remained important to Venice because of its lucrative trading links with the Islamic world. Not surprisingly, an expansionist Ottoman Empire wanted to make Crete its own.

The excuse the Ottomans needed for war came in 1644. In September of that year, a convoy of Ottoman ships was attacked by the Knights of Malta while en route from Constantinople to Alexandria in Egypt. Aboard the convoy were several important Ottoman pilgrims, including Sünbül Aga, the Kadi of Cairo, who was killed. Several hundred Ottoman subjects were also seized during the raid and later sold as slaves. After the attack, the Maltese Knights sailed to Crete, putting in at a port on the island's southern coast.

Hearing of the incident, the Porte (the Ottoman government) accused Venice of being involved in the incident because the Knights of Malta were a close ally of the Venetians. Venice refuted the claim, but the Ottomans now had their casus belli. An Ottoman force was assembled consisting of more than 400

> “THE DEFEAT AND LOSS OF CRETE WAS A HUMILIATION FOR VENICE AND VENETIAN ANGER WOULD SIMMER FOR YEARS”



© Alamy

ships and 50,000 men under the command of Silahdar Yusuf Pasha. Departing from the Dardanelles in April 1645, the fleet dropped anchor at the port of Navarino in the Peloponnese. Here it remained for almost a month while rumours of an attack on Malta were spread.

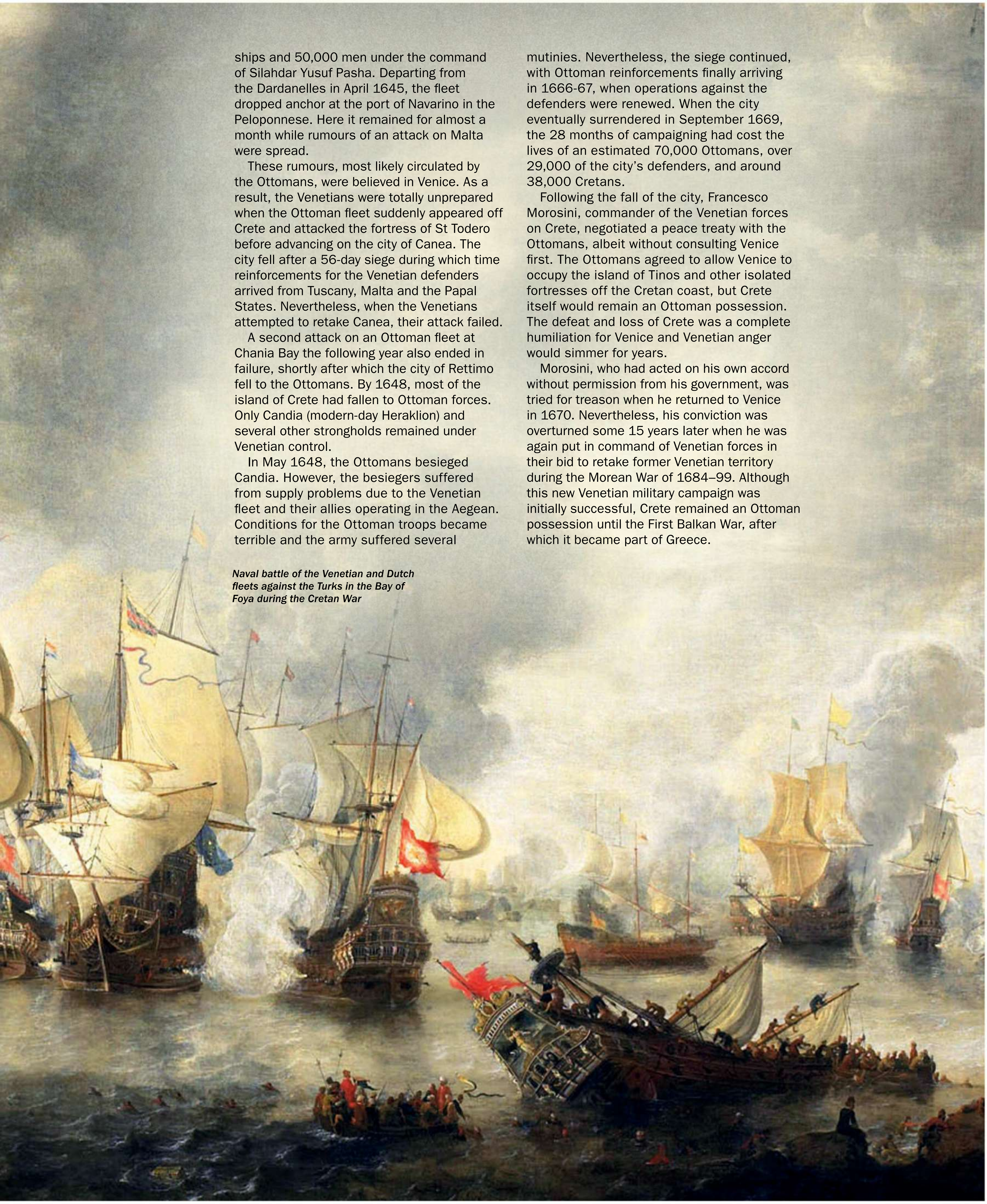
These rumours, most likely circulated by the Ottomans, were believed in Venice. As a result, the Venetians were totally unprepared when the Ottoman fleet suddenly appeared off Crete and attacked the fortress of St Todero before advancing on the city of Canea. The city fell after a 56-day siege during which time reinforcements for the Venetian defenders arrived from Tuscany, Malta and the Papal States. Nevertheless, when the Venetians attempted to retake Canea, their attack failed.

A second attack on an Ottoman fleet at Chania Bay the following year also ended in failure, shortly after which the city of Rettimo fell to the Ottomans. By 1648, most of the island of Crete had fallen to Ottoman forces. Only Candia (modern-day Heraklion) and several other strongholds remained under Venetian control.

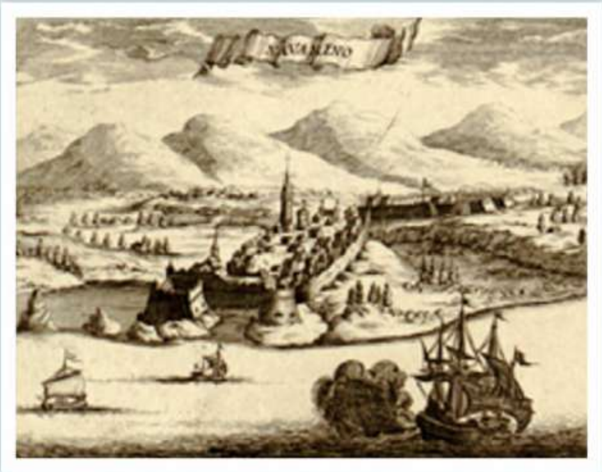
In May 1648, the Ottomans besieged Candia. However, the besiegers suffered from supply problems due to the Venetian fleet and their allies operating in the Aegean. Conditions for the Ottoman troops became terrible and the army suffered several mutinies. Nevertheless, the siege continued, with Ottoman reinforcements finally arriving in 1666-67, when operations against the defenders were renewed. When the city eventually surrendered in September 1669, the 28 months of campaigning had cost the lives of an estimated 70,000 Ottomans, over 29,000 of the city's defenders, and around 38,000 Cretans.

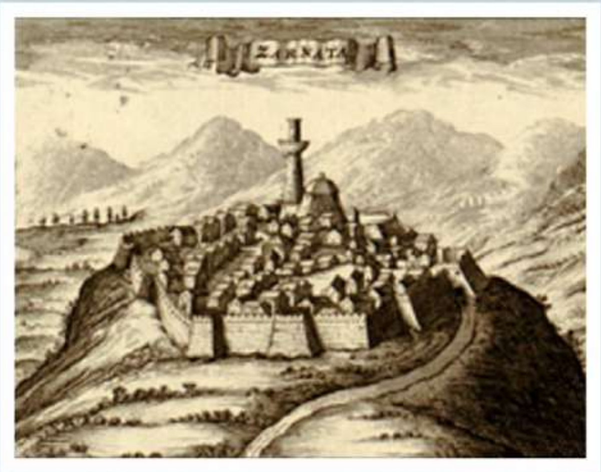
Following the fall of the city, Francesco Morosini, commander of the Venetian forces on Crete, negotiated a peace treaty with the Ottomans, albeit without consulting Venice first. The Ottomans agreed to allow Venice to occupy the island of Tinos and other isolated fortresses off the Cretan coast, but Crete itself would remain an Ottoman possession. The defeat and loss of Crete was a complete humiliation for Venice and Venetian anger would simmer for years.

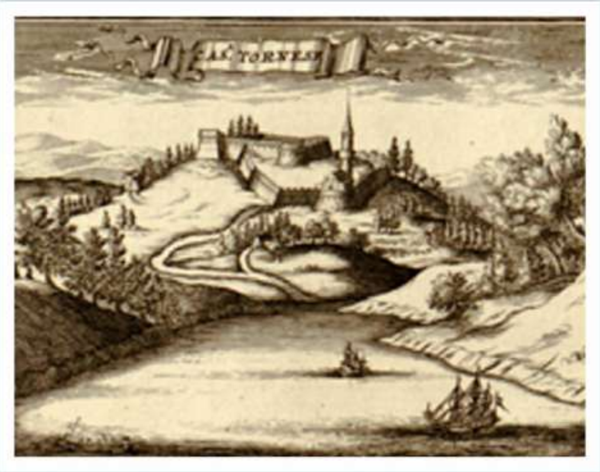
Morosini, who had acted on his own accord without permission from his government, was tried for treason when he returned to Venice in 1670. Nevertheless, his conviction was overturned some 15 years later when he was again put in command of Venetian forces in their bid to retake former Venetian territory during the Morean War of 1684–99. Although this new Venetian military campaign was initially successful, Crete remained an Ottoman possession until the First Balkan War, after which it became part of Greece.



Naval battle of the Venetian and Dutch fleets against the Turks in the Bay of Foya during the Cretan War







THE KINGDOM OF MOREA

Following Ottoman defeat at the Battle of Vienna, Venice goes on the offensive in hope of recovering lost territories in the Peloponnese in what became known as the Morean War

Between 1645 and 1669, the Venetians and Ottomans fought a costly war over Crete. During the conflict, the Venetian commander, Francesco Morosini, allied himself with the Maniots and together landed in Morea before taking Kalamata in 1659. Nevertheless, the Ottomans eventually prevailed and conquered Crete in 1669.

In 1683 the Great Turkish War broke out between Austria and the Ottomans, the latter suffering a heavy defeat at the Battle of Vienna. This defeat encouraged the Venetians to attempt to recover their former territories in the Aegean and Dalmatia. In April 1684, the Most Serene Republic of Venice declared war on the Ottoman Empire.

Morosini was again selected to command the Venetian forces, which also included mercenaries recruited from Italian and German states. Financial and military assistance was also secured from the Knights of Malta, the Knights of St Stephen, the Duchy of Savoy, and the Papal States.

In August 1684, the island of Lefkada fell to the Venetians before they advanced over the mainland region of Acarnania. By late September, the coastal fortresses of Preveza and Vonitsa fell to Morosini's forces, effectively removing the Ottomans from the region and securing the Venetian lines of communication with Venice. These early victories encouraged the Greeks to side with the Venetians against the Ottomans.

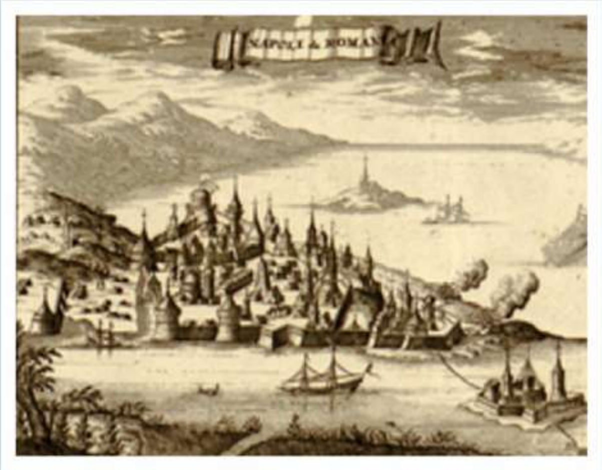
Morosini next looked to the Peloponnese, where again the Maniots were promising to offer their support. However, Ismail Pasha, the Ottoman military commander in Morea, moved 10,000 men to the Mani peninsula, reinforcing several Ottoman forts and preventing the Maniots from keeping their promise. Nevertheless, the Venetians took the fort of Koroni in August 1685 and advanced on Kalamata, where they defeated an Ottoman force in mid-September. By the end of the month Mani was under Venetian control, as was much of Messenia.

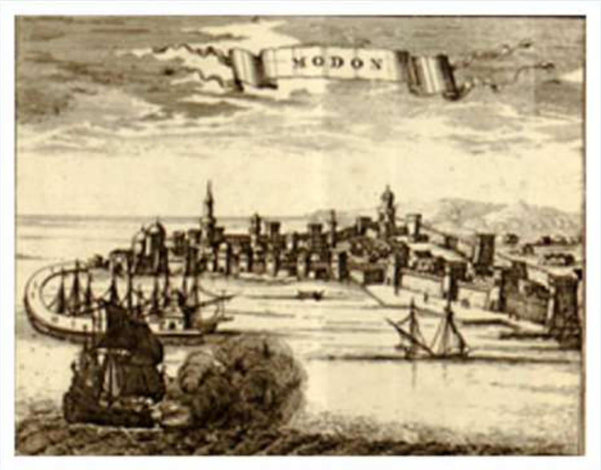
With winter approaching, the Venetians retired to the Ionian Islands in October but suffered heavy losses due to plague. Nevertheless, they repulsed an Ottoman attack to retake Mani in April 1686. Otto Wilhelm Königsmarck now assumed command of Venetian land forces (Morosini commanding naval forces) and, in June, took Pylos and besieged the fortress of Navarino. Königsmarck would defeat an Ottoman relief force, leading to the surrender of the fort.

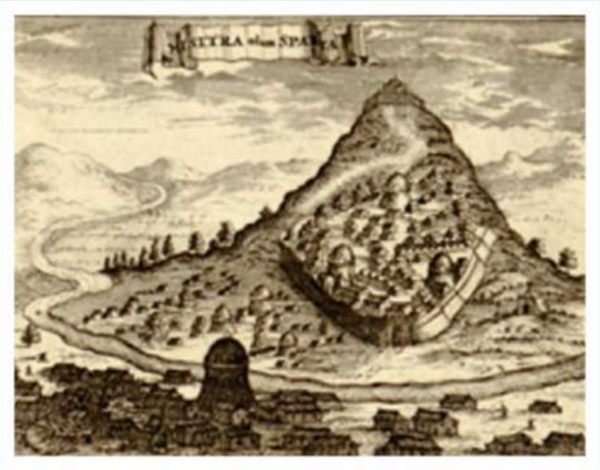
Königsmarck next advanced on Argos and Nafplion in the Peloponnese. A 7,000-strong Ottoman army under Ismail landed near Argos but this was repulsed by the Venetians, who took the town and forced the Ottomans to withdraw to Corinth. Repeated assaults of Königsmarck's position followed but all were defeated and Nafplion fell in September. Ismail was compelled to retreat to Achaea.

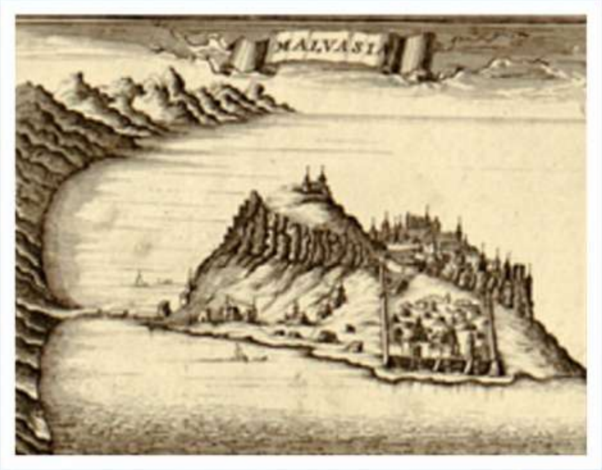
> "IN APRIL 1684, THE MOST SERENE REPUBLIC OF VENICE DECLARED WAR ON THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE"

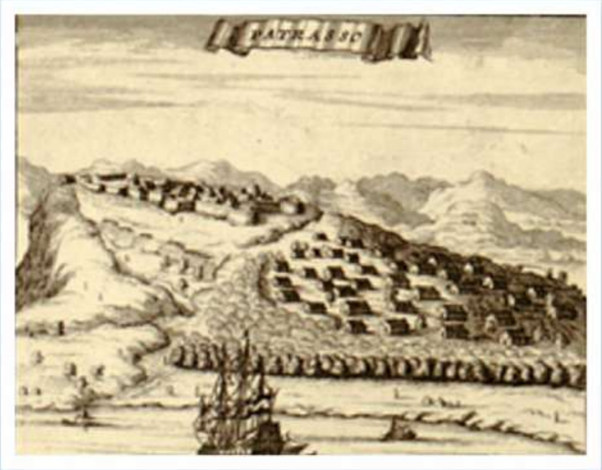
Morosini next advanced on Patras, the final major Ottoman position in the Peloponnese, which controlled the entrance to the Corinthian Gulf. Landing with 14,000 men in July 1687, Morosini was attacked by an Ottoman army under Mehmed Pasha. However, Mehmed was defeated and the Venetians captured Patras as well as several key forts. The following month, Morosini occupied Corinth and Mystra. The Peloponnese was now effectively under Venetian control.

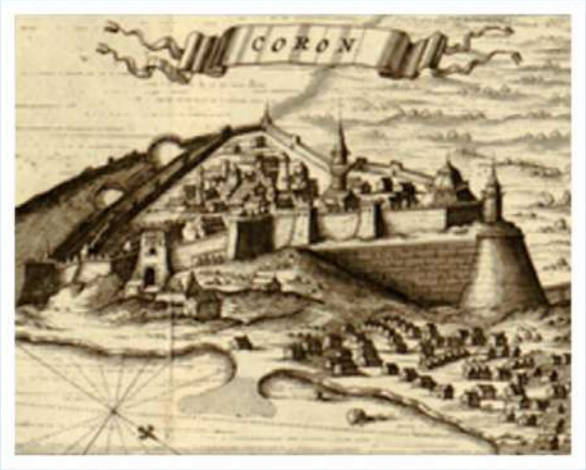












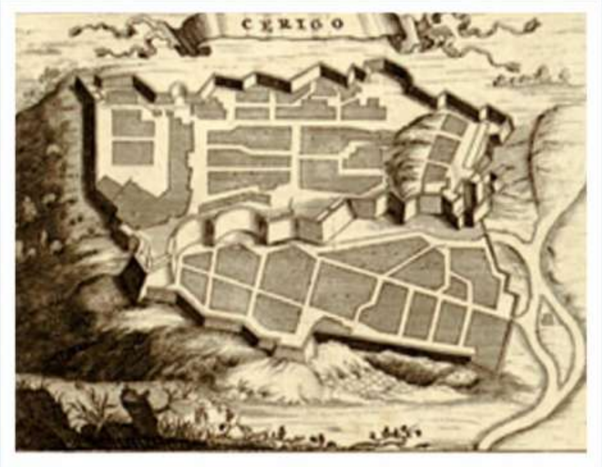
Königsmarck's army then advanced into central Greece in September 1687, laying siege to the Acropolis of Athens. The Turkish garrison surrendered after six days, but another outbreak of plague forced the Venetians to withdraw to the Peloponnese in April 1688. Morosini besieged Chalkis in July, yet Ismail was able to keep the city supplied, then another plague hit the Venetian army, which claimed Königsmarck's life in September. The next month, Morosini ordered an assault which resulted in heavy losses. Conceding defeat, he withdrew and suffered another reversal at Monemvasia in 1689 before returning to Venice.

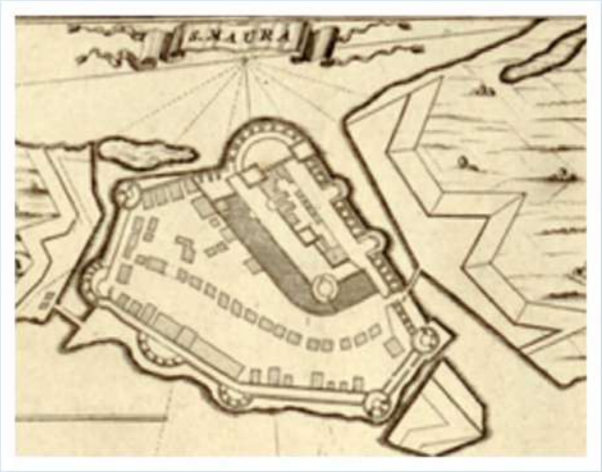
Now under the rule of Suleiman II, the Ottomans began a counteroffensive against the Venetians. However, most Ottoman troops were needed to fight Austria and so the offensive in Morea was limited. Enlisting the help of the Maniot pirate Limberakis Gerakaris, the Ottomans invaded the Peloponnese in 1692, retaking Corinth and besieging Acrocorinth and Argos, albeit unsuccessfully. Several more invasions followed in 1694 and 1695 but Gerakaris would defect to the Venetians, who eventually imprisoned him for his savage behaviour.

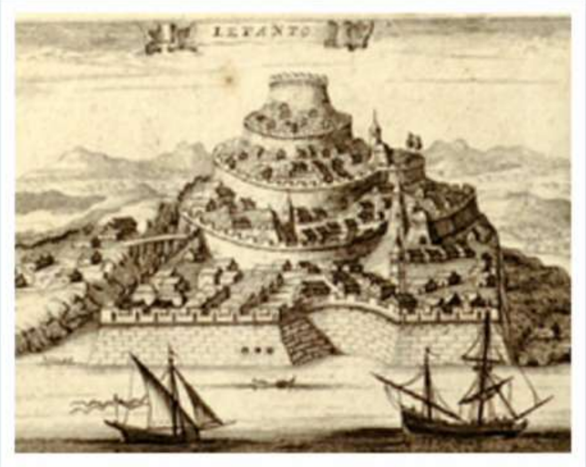
In January 1699, the Morean War came to an end with the Treaty of Karlowitz. It confirmed Kefalonia as a Venetian possession and Morea was divided into four provinces. However, the war resulted in an economic crisis for the Peloponnese and the Orthodox Greeks came to resent the new Venetian bureaucracy. Ultimately, Venice had become weak and in 1715 the Ottomans would retake Morea.

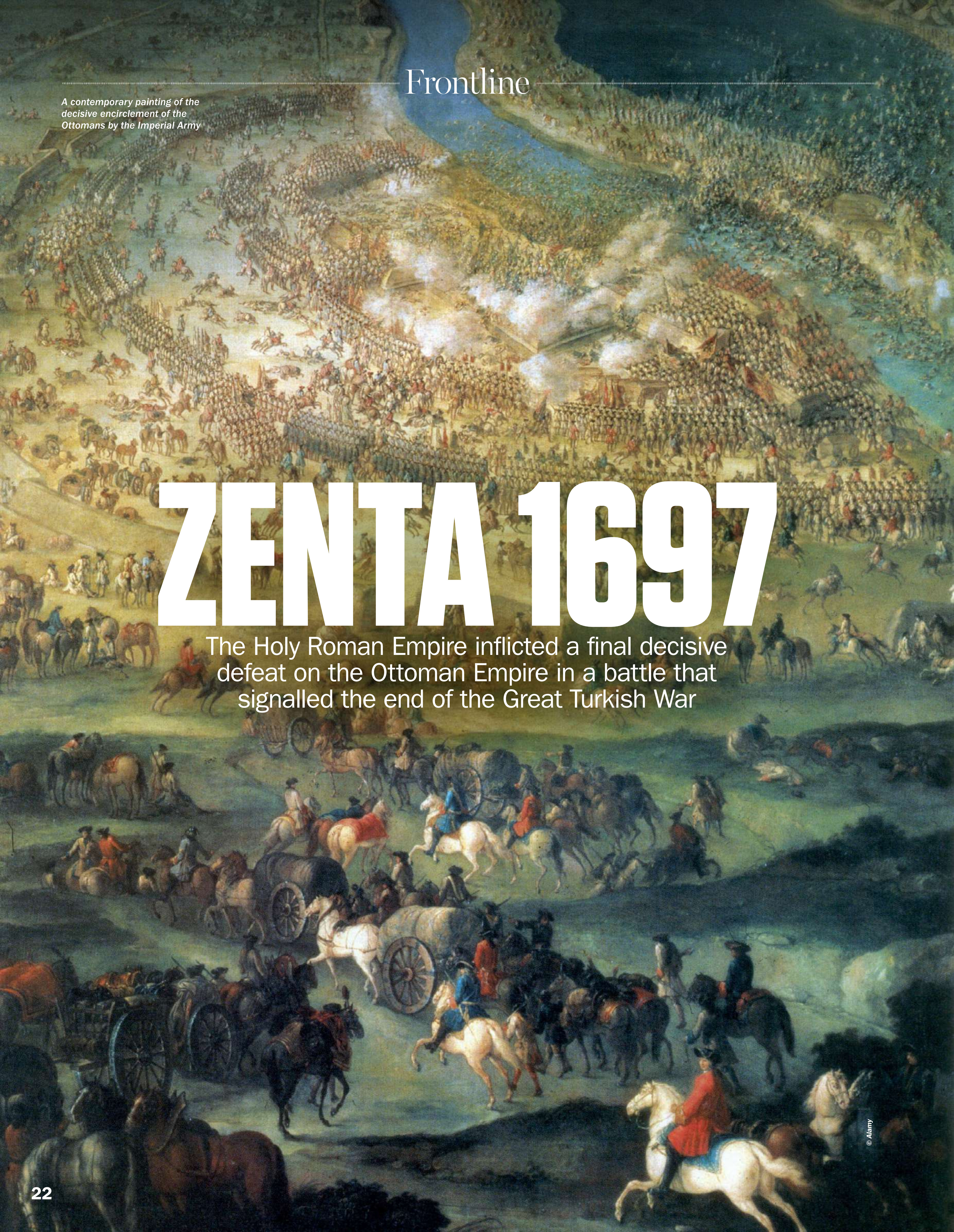
Right: *The fort of Rion near Patras. Originally built in 1499, the structure as seen today dates from the Morean War*

All images © Alamy









A contemporary painting of the decisive encirclement of the Ottomans by the Imperial Army

© Alamy

ZENTA 1697

The Holy Roman Empire inflicted a final decisive defeat on the Ottoman Empire in a battle that signalled the end of the Great Turkish War

By 1697, the Ottoman Empire had suffered years of setbacks against the Holy League. The Great Turkish War had started badly with their famous reverse at the Battle of Vienna in 1683, and in the following years the League had inflicted defeat after defeat. These were disasters for a proud empire. At the height of their power, the Ottomans directly administered territory from Hungary and the Balkans in the north to Egypt, Mecca and Mesopotamia in the south. Their deep incursion into Central Europe had alarmed European Christendom for many years but until the 1684 formation of the Holy League, Christian powers had been unable to regain lost territory. The alliance of the Holy Roman Empire, Russia, Poland-Lithuania and Venice dramatically turned the tide with the Ottomans losing territory in Hungary, Transylvania and the northern Black Sea.

By the late 1680s, the League had advanced into the Balkans, which was the Ottomans' European gateway. One of the League's most symbolic victories was the fall of Belgrade, which was captured after a bloody siege in 1688. However, in one of their few successes during the war, the Ottomans launched a counterattack and recaptured the city two years later.

The reassertion of Ottoman power in Serbia prolonged the war, with Sultan Mustafa II taking personal command of his army. In the years following the recapture of Belgrade during 1695-96, Mustafa won consecutive victories against the League at the battles of Lugos, Cenei and Ulas. In April 1697 he felt confident enough to plan a large invasion of Hungary and left Edirne, Turkey, with approximately 100,000 men.

Mustafa reached Belgrade in August and left after just one week with the intention of marching on the Hungarian city of Szeged. In response, the Habsburgs dispatched Field Marshal Prince Eugene of Savoy to counter the Ottoman threat. Eugene had only been appointed as Commander-in-Chief of the Imperial Army one month previous and it was his first independent command. However, he was a highly experienced soldier with his service stretching back to the Battle of Vienna in 1683. Assembling a multinational force of 50,000 German, Austrian, Hungarian and Serbian troops, Eugene was greatly outnumbered by Mustafa's force. At this stage, the Ottomans numbered almost their original complement of 100,000 men, or 75,000 soldiers at the very least.

The prince versus the sultan

When Mustafa heard of Eugene's advance into the Balkans, the Ottoman march to Szeged was abandoned with the intention of wintering in Romania. Despite being outnumbered, Eugene was determined to fight and met the Ottomans as they were crossing the River Tisza near the Serbian town of Zenta on 11 September 1697.

The arrival of Eugene's army surprised the Ottomans, who had camped behind field fortifications as they crossed the river using a single bridge. The Tisza was behind Mustafa's force, which enabled Eugene to trap them with a surprise artillery bombardment using his 60 guns. The Ottomans sustained heavy casualties under this cannon fire and were in the process of withdrawing when the Imperial cavalry charged. Now forced to retreat across the bridge over the Tisza, the Ottomans were trapped and cut off from escape by the Imperial infantry. The bridge was captured and thousands of Ottoman soldiers drowned while attempting to swim across the river.

Mustafa was forced to abandon his army and retreat to western Romania while 30,000 of his troops (including senior military figures) were killed, wounded or drowned. The Imperial Army only suffered casualties of 429 killed and 1,598 wounded. Vast amounts of Ottoman booty were also captured, including dozens of artillery pieces, thousands of pack animals and the lucrative Ottoman royal treasure chest.

> **"30,000 OF MUSTAFA'S TROOPS, INCLUDING SENIOR MILITARY FIGURES, WERE KILLED, WOUNDED OR DROWNED"**

Zenta was only the start of Eugene's illustrious military career as one of the greatest generals of his age but the battle itself was momentous. The Imperial Army gained complete freedom of action in Bosnia and Sarajevo was captured on 22 October 1697. The Ottomans were forced to the negotiating table, which was ratified by the Treaty of Karlowitz in 1699. The once proud empire relinquished vast swathes of land, including Hungary and Transylvania. Their ambitions to conquer Central Europe were finally ended.

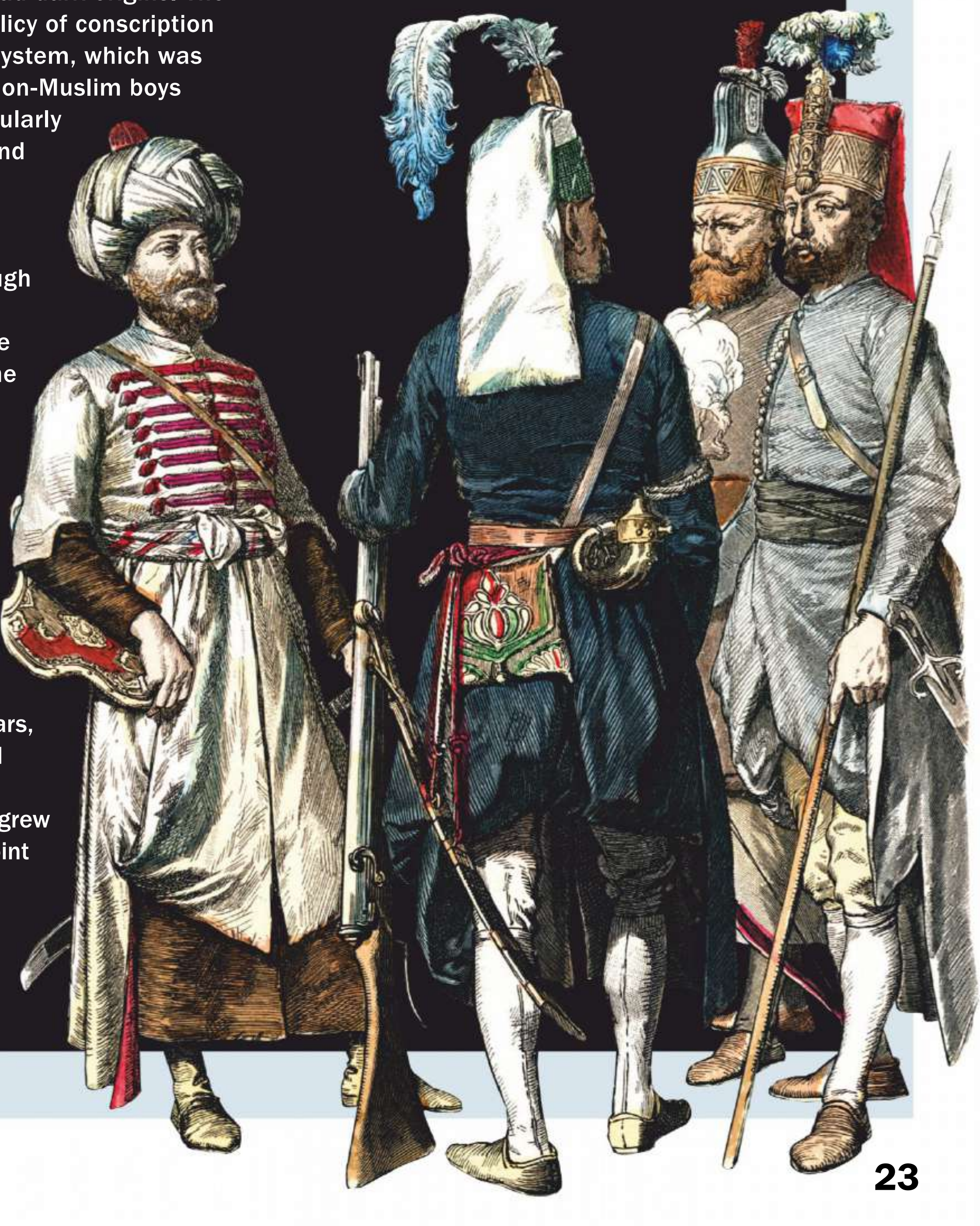
JANISSARIES

The Ottoman sultan's corps of bodyguards were feared soldiers, but they were traditionally child conscripts who were brutally recruited

An elite infantry corps, the Janissaries were the Ottoman sultan's household troops. Most likely founded in the mid-14th century by Murad I, the Janissaries had dark origins. The Ottomans conducted a policy of conscription known as the 'devsirme' system, which was effectively child slavery. Non-Muslim boys aged eight to 20 were regularly taken from their homes and forced to convert to Islam as part of their Janissary training. Recruits mostly came from Greece, although other Europeans from the Balkans and Hungary were gradually introduced as the empire expanded.

Living an austere military lifestyle, the Janissaries have been compared to Ancient Rome's Praetorian Guards and were the most feared soldiers in both Europe and Asia. Each Janissary had to serve a minimum of 20 years, live in special barracks and remain celibate until they retired. Their power slowly grew within the empire to the point where sultans had to grant them special privileges.

Although the devsirme system was abolished in the late-17th century, the Janissaries had become proud and refused to update their fighting tactics. This decline was most widely seen in their defeat at Zenta but the battle also saw the Janissaries fight back against their masters. The highest-ranking Ottoman casualty was Elmas Mehmed Pasha, Grand Vizier (de facto Prime Minister) to Mustafa II. When defeat became apparent, the Janissaries mutinied and garrotted the Grand Vizier with a bowstring.



A German depiction of 17th century Janissaries

© Alamy

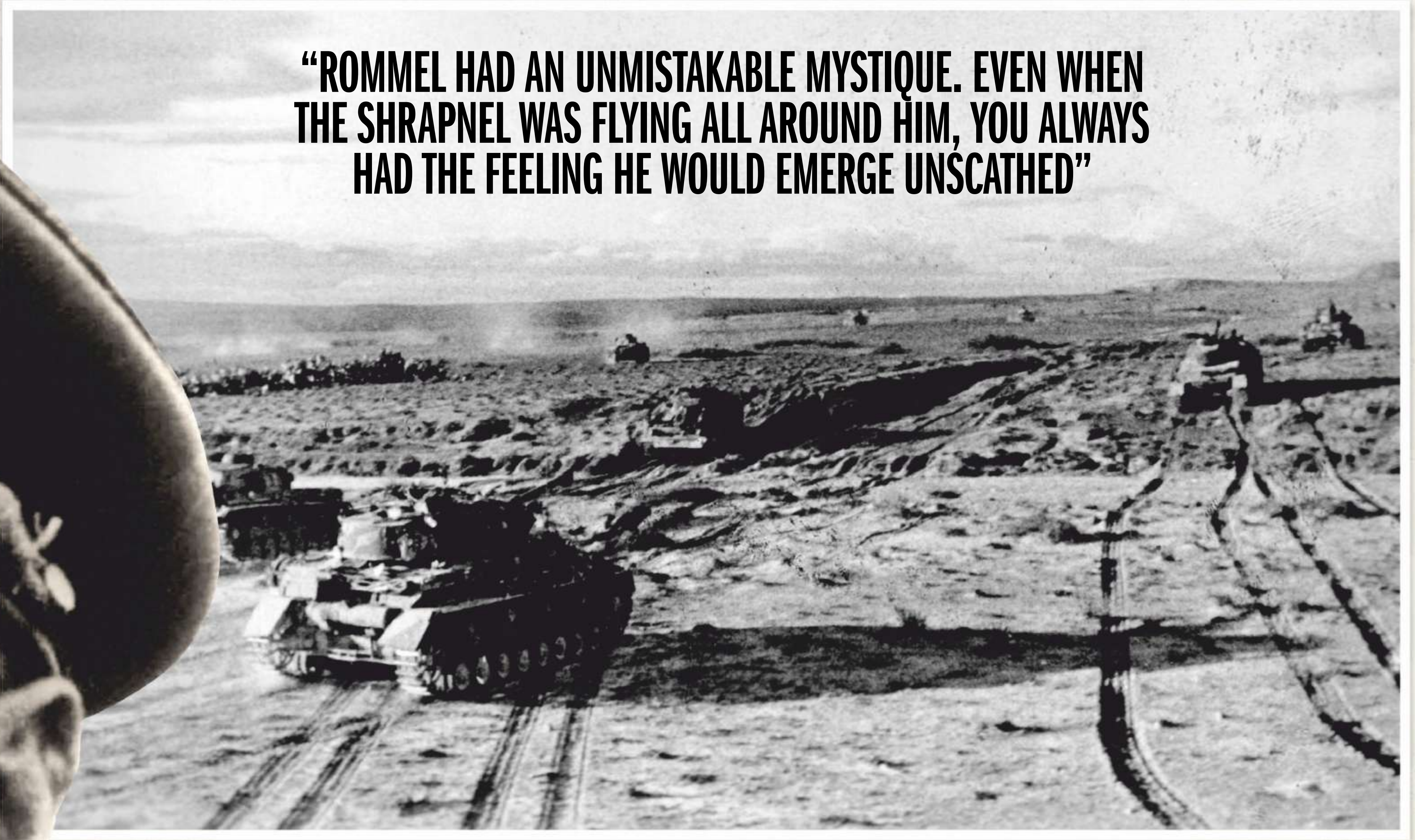
RISE OF THE AFRIKA KORPS

On 12 February 1941, Lieutenant General Erwin Rommel arrived in Italian Libya. It would mark the beginning of two years fighting with the Afrika Korps, during which he would win a remarkable reputation, and at least at the outset entirely reverse Axis fortunes in North Africa

WORDS **MICHAEL JONES**

A German Sonderkommando patrol in an armed Steyr truck

An Afrika Korps Panzer III pictured during the Battle of Agedabia, 1942



“ROMMEL HAD AN UNMISTAKABLE MYSTIQUE. EVEN WHEN THE SHRAPNEL WAS FLYING ALL AROUND HIM, YOU ALWAYS HAD THE FEELING HE WOULD EMERGE UNSCATHED”

Above: A Nazi propaganda photograph depicting panzers near Tunisia

All images © Alamy

A professional soldier through and through, even before his arrival in Africa, Erwin Rommel had gathered praise from friend and foe alike for the perceived humane and decent way he waged war. “He had an unmistakable mystique. Even when the shrapnel was flying all around him, you always had the feeling he would emerge unscathed,” commented his driver, Rudolf Schneider. British Prime Minister Winston Churchill even called him “a great general” in the House of Commons. Yet in his first few months in the African desert Rommel carved out a niche for himself by rather less honourable methods, resorting to clever propaganda and on some occasions rank insubordination. The 49-year-old commander believed that he was destined for fame and glory and would not allow his military superiors, in either Rome or Berlin, to stand in his way.

‘A pitiful mess’

It was never the intention of Hitler or his Army Staff to make any sort of military intervention in North Africa. After the Luftwaffe failed to subdue Britain, the Führer’s gaze turned eastwards, towards the Soviet Union. On 18 December 1940 Hitler issued Führer Directive 21, ordering leaders of the Wehrmacht to start planning for an assault on Russia. However, the Italians had made an ill-judged invasion of Egypt that autumn. “This is the glory we have sought for three centuries,” Benito Mussolini declared, boasting that the Suez Canal would soon be in his hands. Marshal Rodolfo Graziani’s 10th Army heavily outnumbered the British and Commonwealth forces of General Archibald Wavell. It advanced some 65 miles into Egypt, then paused to regroup. But this triumph was short-lived: a skilful British counter attack turned the tables on the Italians and by the end of the year they were in full retreat.

That retreat soon turned into a rout. Wavell’s troops first chased Graziani out of Egypt and then pursued him into Libya. At the beginning of February 1941 the demoralised Italian 10th Army surrendered. The British took more than 130,000 prisoners, captured 420 tanks and 845 guns, and occupied the province of Cyrenaica (in eastern Libya). “Not only has Italy been made militarily impotent in Africa,” wrote German diarist Friedrich Kellner, “but its reputation has been so damaged it can hardly be revived in this war.” Fearing an utter collapse, Hitler now came to Mussolini’s rescue, deciding a small force would be sent to Libya to shore up his ally. When its leader, Lieutenant General Rommel, arrived at German Army High Command on 6 February, Italian remnants were clustered around their last major stronghold of Tripoli. It seemed that a last, determined onslaught by Wavell could push them into the sea. The situation, Rommel was informed, was “a pitiful mess”.

A sense of destiny

On arriving in Tripoli, Rommel had little at his disposal. On 15 February a reconnaissance battalion and anti-tank detachment were shipped in. That day Rommel put on a military parade but any appearance of strength was illusory – the vehicles drove round the block then re-joined the back of the column. To fool British air reconnaissance, hundreds of dummy tanks were manufactured – wood and cardboard constructs mounted on ordinary Volkswagen cars. “We must try and keep the

© Getty

Left: *Rommel's stunning success earned him the fierce devotion of his men*

enemy guessing about our strength until more substantial reinforcements arrive," he told his officers. Rommel knew that if Wavell made a full-scale advance on Tripoli, his situation would be grave indeed. But Wavell sent many of his troops to Greece instead, to counter another Italian invasion threat. The small German contingent was granted some crucial breathing space.

Rommel's instructions (codenamed Operation Sunflower) were clear: he was to bolster the remaining Italian troops and try to stabilise the front. His force was put under Italian operational command with little remit for independent action. For the first ten days, Rommel undertook a thorough reconnaissance, knowing that further reinforcements were on their way. The Fifth Light Division was to arrive towards the end of February and the Fifteenth Panzer Division would follow, but only at the beginning of May. It was envisaged that the Germans would use this time to acclimatise to desert conditions because unlike the British, who had retained a military presence in Egypt since 1882, they had little experience of North African warfare. In the meantime, they were ordered to stay on the defensive.

However, Rommel had other ideas. Hitler's chief adjutant, Colonel Rudolf Schmundt, was attached to his party, allowing a direct link to the Führer, one that bypassed the Army Command in Berlin. Schmundt flew back and forth between Tripoli and Hitler's mountain retreat at the Berghof. "The Führer is delighted with the initiative you are showing in tackling the job," Schmundt reported. "He has granted all your requests." These included immediately shipping additional anti-tank weapons, mines, and the Fifth Light Division's main armoured unit, the Fifth Panzer Regiment. And then Schmundt addressed the issue of prestige, so important to Rommel, concluding: "The Führer will take care that there won't be any historical distortion of where the credit goes."

As the Fifth Panzer Regiment disembarked on 21 February 1941, Rommel had, at last, a more substantial force at his disposal, with 105 medium and 51 light tanks, and 50 Stukas and 20 fighter planes in support. He wanted a name for it, one that would encourage an esprit de corps amongst his men and catch the imagination of the media. Army High Command had simply designated him 'Commander of the German Troops in Libya'. Rommel had something more stirring in mind and chose the name Deutsches Afrikakorps. It was a play on Deutsches Alpenkorps, the specialised mountain unit he had served with in World War I, winning the highest award for valour, the Pour Le Mérite, in November 1917 at Caporetto. The German High Command was once again bypassed. Hitler – who was in on the idea – approved it immediately. Soon the name Afrika Korps would be on everybody's lips.

On 5 March 1941 there was a special showing in Tripoli of the German propaganda film, *Victory In The West*, which portrayed the battle for France the previous summer. Rommel featured in events, as commander of the Seventh Panzer Division, and also was an adviser to the film (personally directing a sequence that showed the crossing of the River Somme). At the end of the screening he proclaimed to the audience that one day they would be seeing a film called *Victory In Africa*. In France, Rommel's Panzers had been nicknamed 'the Ghost Division', partly because of their ability to surprise the enemy, but also because of their commander's habit

The Afrika Korps on
parade in Tripoli, 1941

© Alamy

of disregarding orders he did not agree with. A similar story was about to be played out in the North African desert.

A fateful moment

Rommel was quickly gaining an accurate idea of British strength using aerial reconnaissance and intercepting radio signals. With many of the enemy's troops being redeployed to Greece he believed that a chance was opening up. He wanted to go on the offensive before the British brought in reinforcements and properly prepared their defences. On 19 March he flew to Berlin to argue his case, and the following day he saw members of the Army General Staff and also met with Hitler. The contrast could not have been greater. The former treated his plans with disdain and told him firmly that for the next two months he would have to stay put. The Führer was friendly, awarding him the prestigious Oak Leaves to the Knight's Cross, and talked about the possibility of regaining Cyrenaica more quickly. Nothing was decided upon, but Luftwaffe adjutant Nicolaus von Below recalled: "Rommel's manner and energy pleased Hitler – and later he praised him highly." And so did Minister of Propaganda Joseph Goebbels, describing him in his diary as "a magnificent officer and exemplary personality". He already sensed a powerful news story.

Rommel had got to know Hitler after the publication of his book *Infantry Attacks*, which had been a best-seller in Germany in 1937. Its advocacy of speed and manoeuvring to outwit an opponent, maintaining the initiative whenever possible, had delighted the Führer. A year later he appointed him commander of his personal escort battalion (which protected him whenever he travelled outside Germany), and Rommel served in that capacity in the Polish campaign at the war's onset. It had been Hitler's patronage that had secured Rommel command of the Seventh Panzer Division, in 1940, and he knew that he could always appeal to the Führer directly, going above the heads of the Army General Staff. And now Goebbels was also enthused, appointing a team from the Reich Propaganda Ministry to join the Afrika Korps and film combat sequences, direct photo shoots and file radio dispatches once military action commenced. Rommel decided that this would be within days, whatever his orders from above said.

Afrika Korps tanks pictured leaving their barracks in March 1941

© Getty

The campaign begins

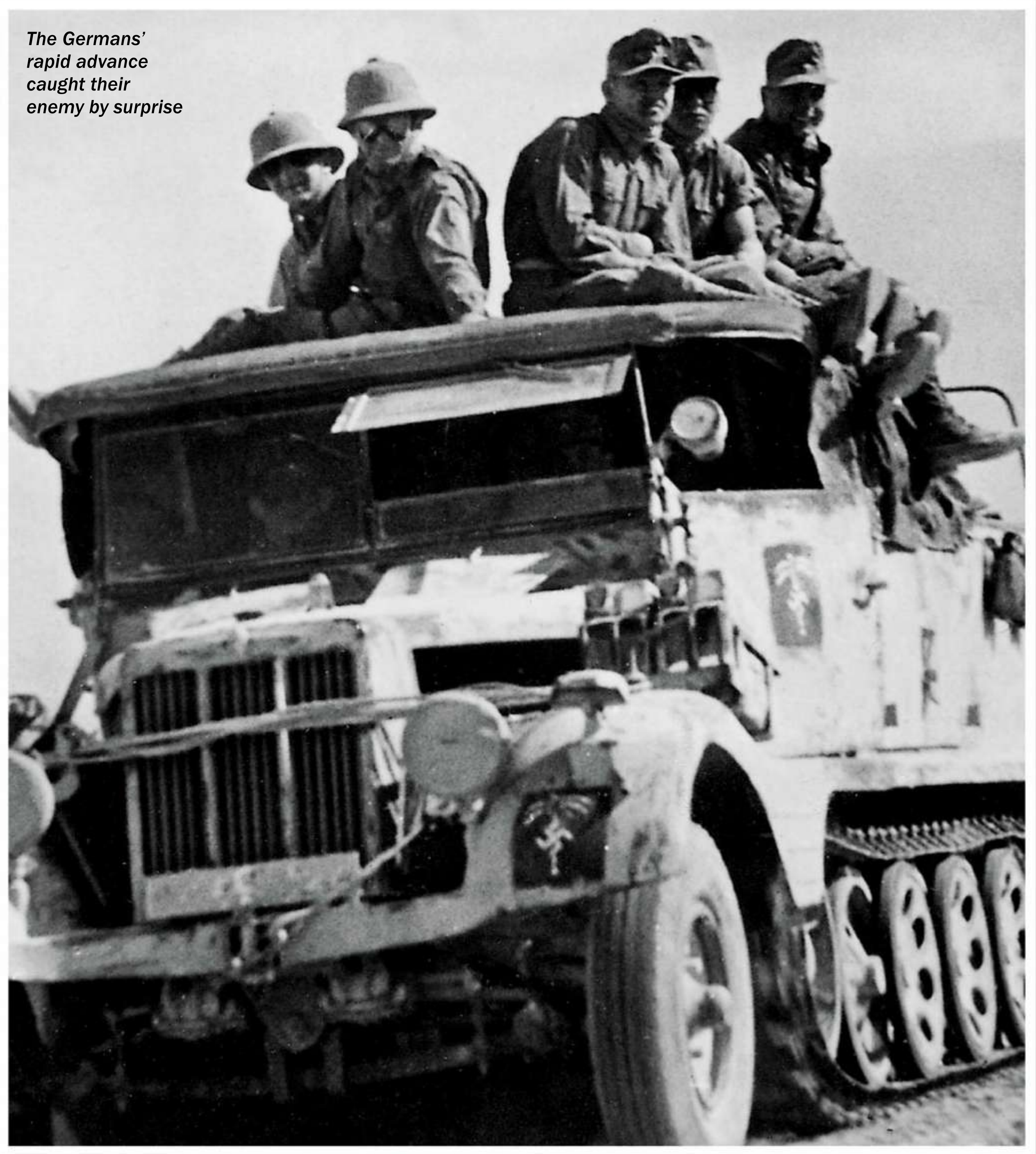
As soon as he returned to Libya, Rommel started pushing his troops eastwards. His first objective was the small town of El Agheila. It was on the bend of the Cyrenaican coastline, about 150 miles west of the port of Benghazi, and formed a natural defensive position. Rommel wanted to test the mettle of his opponents – to see whether they had the will to defend Cyrenaica. On 24 March he launched a dawn assault on the town. While his tanks and armoured cars charged

Afrika Korps troops advancing on the strategically vital Mersa Brega on the coastal road to Benghazi

forward, the vehicles in the rear – the so-called 'cardboard division' of Volkswagens and Fiats with mock pasteboard 'armour' and 'gun barrels' cut from telegraph poles – stirred up a huge cloud of dust. The British, seeing what appeared to be a large enemy contingent, hurriedly withdrew. Rommel had cunningly duped his opponents into retreating without a fight.

The new Commander of Italian Forces in North Africa was General Italo Gariboldi. Rommel told Gariboldi – somewhat implausibly – that he had only attacked El Agheila because the enemy there was harassing his supply columns. But a week later he pushed on another 40 miles to Mersa Brega. Flanked by the sea and salt marshes on one side, and sandy hills on the other, it was another good defensive position, controlling the coastal road to Benghazi. Once more, Rommel launched a dawn assault, on 1 April. Again, the British withdrew. That afternoon, his advance units sped on further, capturing Agedabia. Gariboldi sent Rommel a warning: "It is too early to be launching any major military action – wait for further reinforcements to arrive." These "further reinforcements" were the troops of the Fifteenth Panzer Division, which was only expected to reach Libya in May. But Rommel had no intention of stopping.

There was now a major showdown with the Italian Commander. A stronger warning was issued on 2 April: "I have been informed that your advance is continuing, contrary to my instructions. I order you to halt – and wait for me to arrive." Rommel's response, aware that the British might be pulling out of Benghazi, was to order a reinforced reconnaissance battalion to undertake a 100-mile dash further along the coastal road (the Via Balbia – built by the Italians in the 1930s) to occupy the port. An infuriated Gariboldi confronted Rommel in

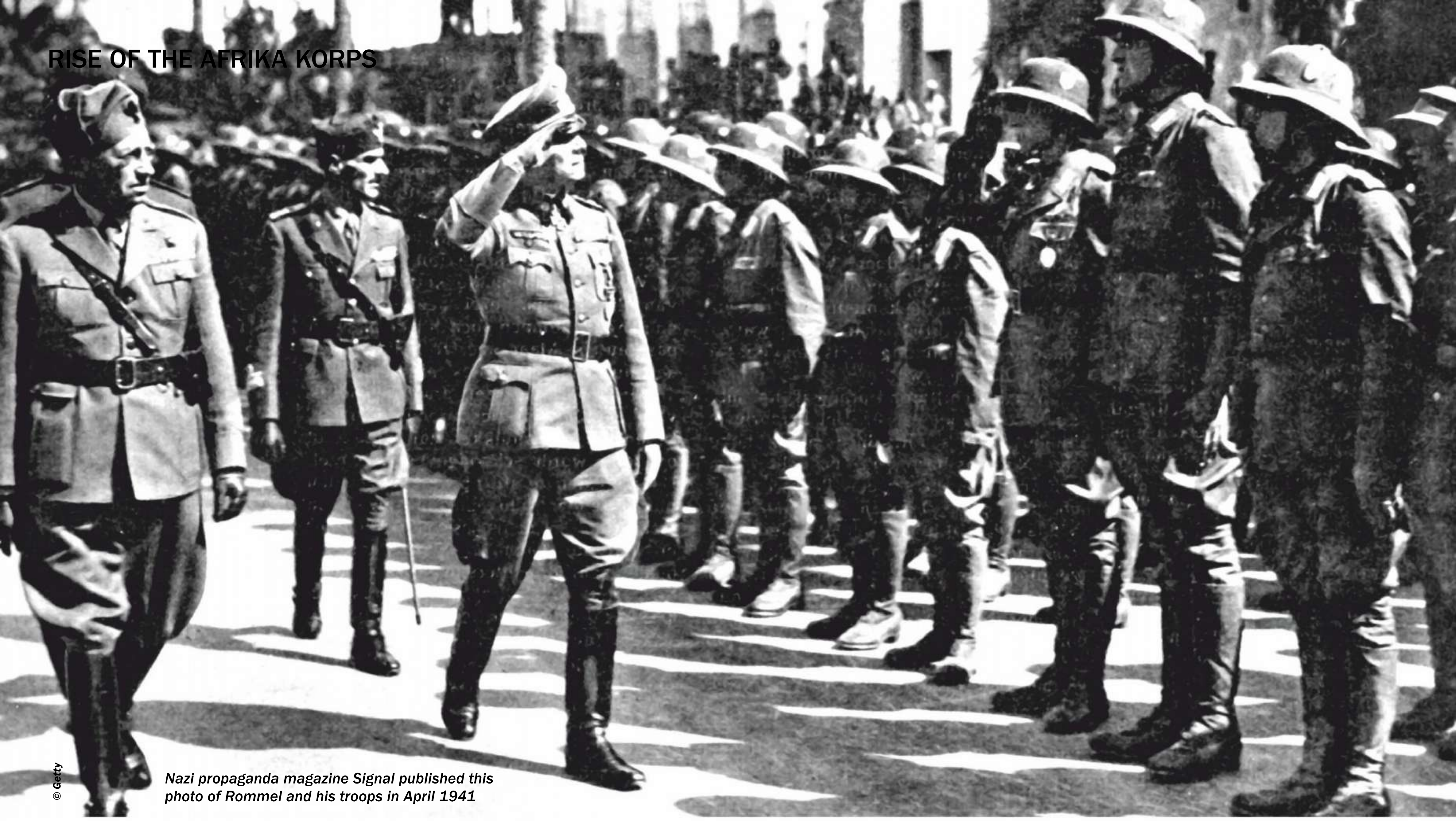


The Germans' rapid advance caught their enemy by surprise

© Alamy

"THE BRITISH, SEEING WHAT APPEARED TO BE A LARGE ENEMY CONTINGENT, HURRIEDLY WITHDREW. ROMMEL HAD DUPED HIS OPPONENTS INTO RETREATING WITHOUT A FIGHT"

© Alamy



© Getty

Nazi propaganda magazine Signal published this photo of Rommel and his troops in April 1941

person, appearing at Rommel's headquarters at 9pm on 3 April.

Gariboldi quickly came to the point: "The Afrika Korps is under my command. It should report the combat situation and move forward only when ordered to do so." Rommel countered: "I have no time for this cumbersome process. As a German general I issue orders based on the immediate military situation." The atmosphere became so tense some feared the two would come to blows. Then the meeting was interrupted. It was a call from Army Command in Berlin, reiterating that Rommel was under Gariboldi's authority, and must obey his instructions. Undeterred, he returned to the conference room and told a bemused Gariboldi he had just been given complete freedom of action on the authority of the Führer. On hearing this, the Italian eventually backed down. The *Afrika Korps War Diary* solemnly repeated this piece of fiction, adding that the closing of the conference was made much easier as a result. The master of deception had struck again.

Later that night, Rommel heard that his armoured column had motored into Benghazi, at 10pm, to be greeted by crowds of cheering Libyans. There was no sign of the British – they had detonated 4,000 tons of ammunition and then fled. Jubilant, he wrote to his wife Lucie: "My superiors in Tripoli, Rome and perhaps Berlin, too, must be clutching their heads in dismay. I took the risk, against all orders and instructions, because the opportunity was there for the taking."

A propaganda triumph

Unfettered by further instructions, Rommel now launched a dramatic thrust across the Cyrenaican peninsula, one contingent racing along the coastal road towards Tobruk, the other (a mixed German-Italian force) cutting across the desert, using an ancient caravan trail. He showed incredible energy, urging his men forward and always leading from the front. The rapid advance pushed logistical support, particularly the resupply of fuel and water, to its very limits. Desert conditions, with sudden sandstorms, were a nightmare. The fine sand choked engine filters, ran off car windshields like rain, and even penetrated the troops' watches. "Can't see more than three yards," one company commander wrote in his diary. "In the afternoon, thank God, the storm subsided." Yet Rommel's tactics were working. Wavell was caught totally by surprise and the speed of Rommel's audacious advance left his British forces in complete disarray. Two British generals were even captured on their way to a staff conference.

"THE SPEED OF ROMMEL'S ADVANCE LEFT WAVELL'S FORCES IN DISARRAY. TWO BRITISH GENERALS WERE EVEN CAPTURED ON THEIR WAY TO A STAFF CONFERENCE"

Goebbels' diary entries were exultant. On 9 April he wrote: "Rommel takes Derna [on the coastal road, 150 miles east of Benghazi]. Miraculous! The military initiative is firmly in our hands – British forces are cut off or in full retreat. We are enacting a stunning revenge on London." A day later he added: "Our press is having a hard job keeping up with it all. Rommel only halts to get ammunition, fuel and provisions – and then he is off again." The Reich Propaganda Ministry went into overdrive, filming a bombing attack on Tobruk harbour, Panzers advancing through the desert, and Rommel chatting to captive British commanders. "Something else was needed to continue Germany's victory euphoria," wrote German diarist Friedrich Kellner, "and this time it's another continent's turn: Africa. Everything is being filmed – it's so theatrical!" Such was the pace of Rommel's advance, his forward detachments had reached the Egyptian frontier within a matter of weeks. At the end of April, Goebbels noted: "Tobruk is now surrounded… it is clear our position in North Africa has been fully secured." A sense of theatre was well justified. As Hitler's Luftwaffe adjutant Nicolaus von Below remarked: "All our newspapers are talking about the Afrika Korps."

But not everyone was happy. Mussolini considered making a formal complaint to Hitler over Rommel's cavalier behaviour, but then thought better of it. General Franz Halder, Army Chief of Staff, fumed: "All day long Rommel rushes about between widely scattered units, and stages reconnaissance raids in which he fritters away his forces… this soldier [has] gone stark mad." But Hitler was delighted with his commander and gave him the complete freedom of action he had hoped for when bluffing Gariboldi. The legend of Rommel and the Afrika Korps had begun.

FURTHER READING

- ✪ ***The Crusader Project*** at rommelsriposte.com
- ✪ ***The Rommel Papers***, ed. Basil Liddell Hart (Da Capo Press, 1982)
- ✪ ***Monty And Rommel: Parallel Lives***, Peter Caddick-Adams (Harry Abrams Press, 2012)

AIRFIX

THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF D-DAY

D-Day Gift Sets

These sets illustrate different stages during Operation Overlord and all of these come with vac-form bases to create the perfect diorama. Most of the models included in each of these sets are also available to purchase individually.

A50162A D-DAY OPERATION OVERLORD

AIRFIX
1:76 D-DAY OPERATION OVERLORD

A5009A D-DAY BATTLEFRONT

AIRFIX
1:76 D-DAY BATTLEFRONT

A50156A D-DAY SEA ASSAULT

AIRFIX
1:72 D-DAY SEA ASSAULT

A50157A D-DAY AIR ASSAULT

AIRFIX
1:72 D-DAY AIR ASSAULT

D-DAY
1944-2019
75th ANNIVERSARY

Airfix.com
and all good retail stockists

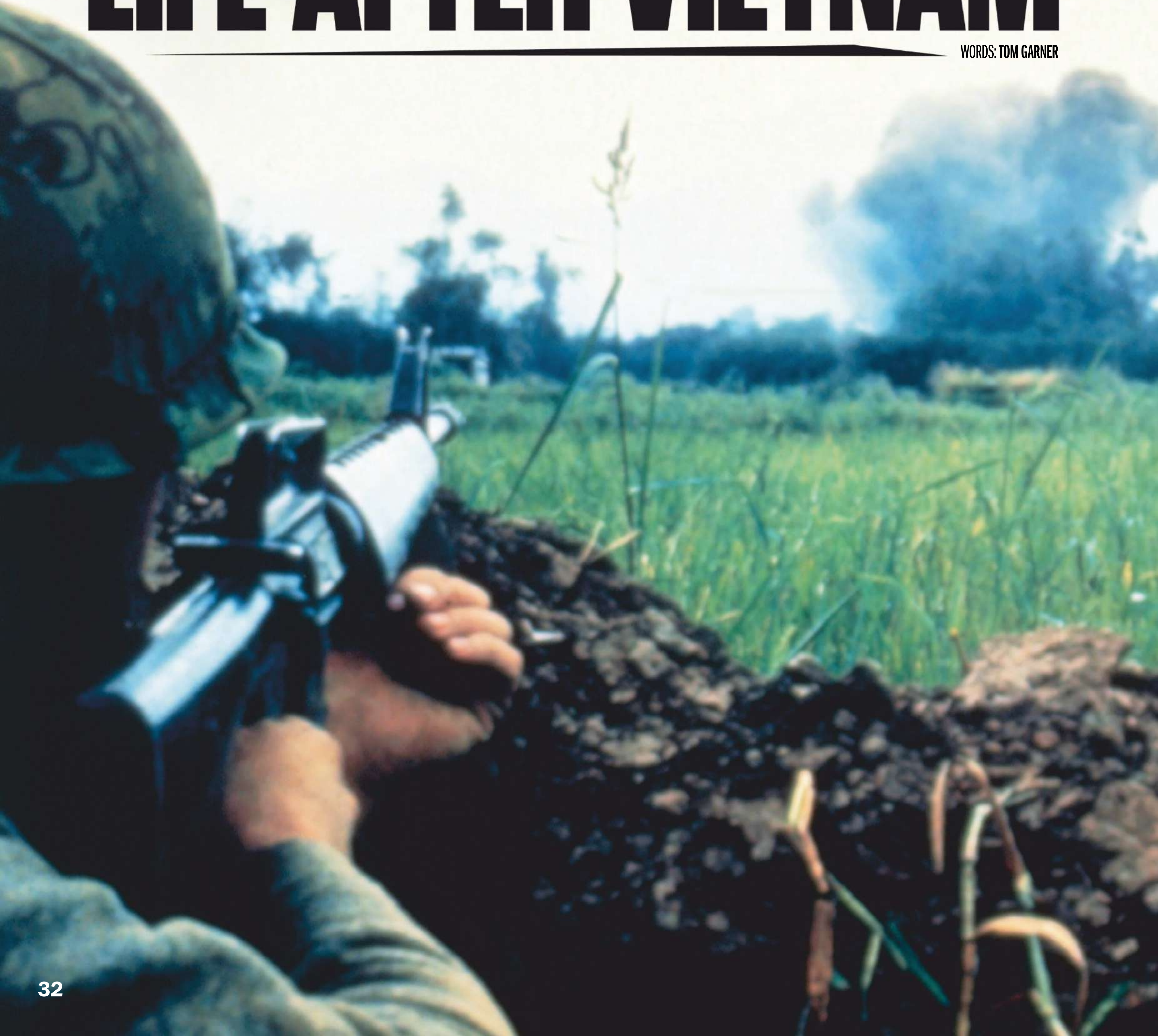
100 YEARS OF Humbrol™

HORNBY HOBBIES
Official Product

TIP OF THE SPEAR

LIFE AFTER VIETNAM

WORDS: **TOM GARNER**



After the Vietnam War, for the first time in US history returning veterans faced a new battle against fierce anti-war opinion and protests. Retired Marine Jack Estes reveals how the traumatic experience of serving in the conflict, and his reception upon rejoining civilian life, led to him to becoming an author and establishing a foundation to help his fellow veterans

For many people, the Vietnam War was a loss of innocence for an entire generation. Young American men volunteered or were drafted to fight in a conflict that polarised opinion in the United States and across the world. Over 58,000 American personnel were killed, but when the surviving servicemen returned home they were often neglected and even abused by those who opposed the war. Readjustment and addiction problems soared as many veterans suffered with the effects of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in a society that took decades to respect their service.

Jack Estes was one veteran who experienced the full brunt of the war and a difficult return to civilian life. A former Marine who was a teenager when he fought in Vietnam, Estes struggled with PTSD but eventually used his experiences to become a prolific writer and the co-founder of a veterans' foundation. He describes terrifying combat against the North Vietnamese, witnessing anti-war protests back home and how he has dealt with his experiences by helping other veterans.

A 'naive' enlistment

Raised in Portland, Oregon, Estes was only 18 years old when he volunteered for the US Marine Corps in January 1968. A sporty student, his reasons for joining were practical: "I was at college at the time, I was going to pitch for the baseball team and I had a girlfriend. The problem was I was flunking out of school, had no job or family support and my girlfriend became pregnant. We both decided that the best thing for me to do – and remember I had no other advice – was to join the Marines. We'd be able to pay for her medical care and I'd make a little money."

Despite early 1968 being the beginning of the Tet Offensive, Estes had no knowledge of the Vietnam War. "I knew nothing about Vietnam," he says. "I couldn't locate it on a map and had no idea what we were fighting for. I knew there was a war going on but I thought I could be an MP [military policeman], have a nice uniform and not actually be in the fighting. I was very naive."

"I KNEW NOTHING ABOUT VIETNAM, I COULDN'T LOCATE IT ON A MAP AND HAD NO IDEA WHAT WE WERE FIGHTING FOR"

Two Marines sight in on Viet Cong movement in a fortified enemy hamlet during an air strike

© Getty

***Below:** Estes pictured armed with his weapon and ammunition belts strapped over his shoulders*

***Bottom:** Estes (left) with his friend Robert 'Bob' Gregory*

Inset images © Jack Estes

Estes was soon introduced to the reality of military life during his often abusive training. "When I went through in 1968, it was a time when drill instructors could actually punch you in the throat or stomach," he says. "One instructor bit my thumb because it wasn't in the right location when I was standing to attention. They used to be able to physically abuse you and do worse than that, and of course that changed years later. That's why when you get out of boot camp you're very proud to have accomplished it because it's very difficult."

'I was totally frightened'

After training, Estes was soon deployed to Vietnam in June 1968 as a lance corporal. His arrival in the humid, surreal environment was laced with fear and uncertainty. "I didn't know what to expect and was just very concerned about being shot in the face," he says. "I don't know why it was a fixation but I was worried about it. When we got off [the plane] you could see waves of heat coming off the tarmac. It was so hot I couldn't believe it so we headed towards an aircraft hangar. The first soldier I saw was this big, tough-looking, dirty guy with a scout dog and an M45 rifle strapped across his chest. However, he was eating an ice-cream!"

© Getty

Left: *Camouflaged US Marines move through low foliage in the Demilitarized Zone during a reconnaissance mission, 1 February 1968*

Estes came under attack almost immediately after his arrival: "On the first night we were stationed in a three-storey building. That night we got incoming fire and somebody yelled 'Rockets!' I thought, 'They never taught us about rockets in boot camp.' We had to bustle out of the building to a sandbagged trench to avoid the shrapnel. On the second or third night I was leaving the mess hall when I heard this shrill sound and looked up to see a long, white rocket that was larger than an artillery piece. It hit the mess hall and killed a bunch of people."

It was a terrible introduction to the realities of war. "I was totally frightened, of course," he says. "When I got to Vietnam I really hadn't prepared myself to see dead people. When I went into the Marines I wasn't worried about the training because I was a high school athlete and boxer and was in great shape. However, when I saw my first friend and squad leader get killed in front of me that was tough."

Assigned to 3rd Platoon, Kilo Company, 3rd Battalion, 9th Marines, Estes spent the first six months of his tour based at Dong Ha Combat Base in the Vietnamese Demilitarized Zone. Dong Ha was the northernmost town of South Vietnam, with the combat base being strategically important. 3rd Platoon (nicknamed Brazer's Battling Bastards) initially spent time at LZ (Landing Zone) Stud, which was later renamed LZ Vandegrift. The Marines lived in basic conditions. "It was in the rear and consisted of two-man tents," he says. "If we were lucky we might get a couple of warm beers during the time we were there and we could go down to the river. Showers were hooked up so that 20-25 of us could wash at the same time – that was a unique situation! They'd also take our operations clothes and burn them in piles next to the showers before we got new clothes."

COMBINED ACTION PLATOONS

These mixed American-South Vietnamese units successfully defended hundreds of Vietnamese villages from the NVA and Viet Cong

Established by the US Marine Corps in 1965, the Combined Action Program was a highly effective counter-insurgency tool that was specifically developed for the Vietnam War. The idea was to set up mixed units of American troops and members of the Vietnamese Popular Forces (PF) inside, or adjacent to, rural hamlets. A typical Combined Action Platoon (CAP) consisted of approximately a dozen Marines, a US Navy corpsman to act as a medic and extra PF militiamen. The PF members were local residents who were either too old or young to join the regular South Vietnamese armed forces.

With an assigned hamlet or village to protect, each CAP was able to act as a force multiplier against North Vietnamese attacks. The NVA or Viet Cong were largely denied sanctuary at a local level and the CAPs often helped to foster good relations between the Americans and villagers. 209 villages and approximately 500,000 Vietnamese civilians were eventually covered by the programme. Although they were often infiltrated by the Viet Cong, no CAP-protected settlement ever came under North Vietnamese control. However, the CAP units were deactivated in September 1970 as the Americans scaled back their participation in the war.

Members of a combi action company, comprising US Marines and platoons of the Vietnamese Popular Force, employ the help of a local to cross a river to a Viet Cong village near Phu Bai

"THERE'S NOTHING HARDER THAN TRYING TO CRAWL UP THE SIDE OF A MOUNTAIN WEARING AN 80LB PACK WITH ENEMY SOLDIERS SHOOTING AT YOU"

Life at the LZ was also dangerous. "We'd receive incoming fire and numerous people were killed," he recalls. "However, it was better than humping through the jungle. There's nothing harder than trying to crawl up the side of a mountain wearing an 80lb pack with enemy soldiers shooting at you."

During this period, Estes' daily tasks involved locating North Vietnamese Army (NVA) soldiers in the highlands of Quang Tri Province. "The only Vietnamese we saw during the first six months were the ones we killed. Normally, you'd be flown in choppers at the base of these mountains. The company's job was to find and engage enemy soldiers and find their firebases that were dug into the mountains. We actually

Estes' first experience of combat was a rocket attack shortly after he landed in Vietnam

© Getty

© Getty

South Vietnamese Popular Force soldiers patrol a resettlement village called Soy My, 1 November 1969

© Getty

found – at the time – the largest cache of NVA weapons and an underground hospital."

Inside the hospital, Kilo Company found NVA equipment that had been supplied from the United States. "We discovered certain items sent from American protest organisations that supported the North Vietnamese. It made me hate those people because they were providing comfort to the enemy."

During these patrols, Estes and his comrades' combat experiences exposed them to horrific sights and sounds: "You could be in a long patrol of perhaps over 30 people and the first guy in line might get shot or wounded, although you couldn't really see where he was. In the jungle, you sometimes couldn't see more than five feet in front of you because it was so thick. A lot could happen around you that you couldn't necessarily see or hear, and then of course when you moved up you'd see what was going on. That could be terrifying. You could also hear gunfire or choppers blasting the area from perhaps a mile [away] at night, with red tracers coming down from the helicopters."

One consequence of this chaotic fighting was heightened fight-or-flight responses. "The slightest thing that would resemble these scenarios would send you off on surging amounts of adrenaline," he says. "The adrenaline helped keep you alive because you couldn't afford to be tired if you were having a surge. But you would take these adrenaline surges back home with you afterwards."

"I USED BATTLE DRESSINGS ON BOB WHILE LYING PRONE AND WHEN I RAN OUT OF THOSE I TOOK OFF MY BOOT AND TIED HIS SHATTERED ARM TOGETHER WITH MY SOCK"

Defending villages

In late 1968, Estes volunteered to be transferred to a Combined Action Platoon (CAP) of US Marines and local South Vietnamese Popular Force (PF) militiamen. He describes how CAPs helped the villagers: "My CAP consisted of ten Marines, a navy corpsman and 15-20 local villagers who were PF soldiers. We were supposed to train them and help protect the local area. We ended up helping to build little footbridges, small schoolrooms and protecting them when they harvested rice. We also ran patrols and I thought it would be easier to be in the village. It turned out to be much more combat."

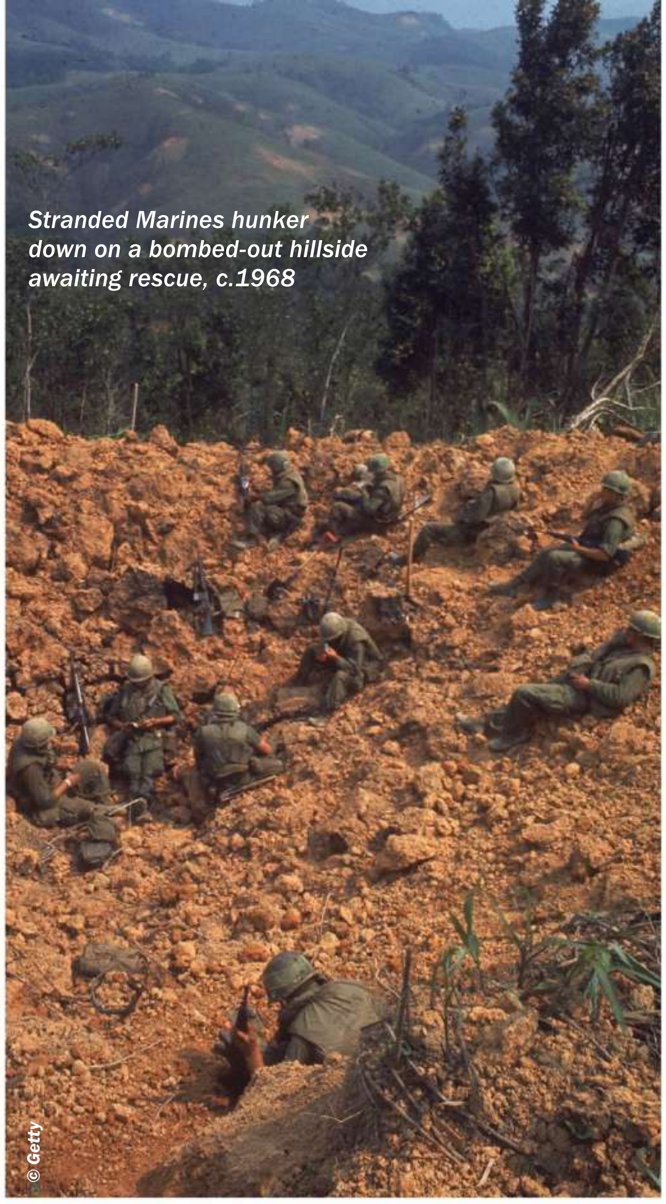
Estes' CAP areas of operations from January 1969 were two villages called Ti Lon One and Ti Lon Two near the city of Da Nang. Although the Americans got on well with most of the villagers, security was not guaranteed. "Our goal was to get the villagers to like us and we were supposed to be a motivational force," he says. "We actually socialised with the few villagers that were in the area and they grew to know us. The problem was that some of them were Viet Cong and when we engaged in contact with the enemy, six or seven out of the 15 Vietnamese soldiers would run away while the others would stay."

The PF soldiers also used antiquated weapons. "The South Vietnamese Army had regular weapons but PF members of a CAP unit went out with crossbows, machetes and old WWII carbines. I therefore had an opportunity to fire a lot of different weapons, including one guy who brought a Thompson submachine gun."

Flares from an American aircraft and ground artillery help a US Marine company under attack in the Demilitarized Zone

© Alamy

A wounded American soldier is helped to cover under North Vietnamese sniper fire



Stranded Marines hunker down on a bombed-out hillside awaiting rescue, c.1968

© Getty

‘My feelings snapped’

Having commenced operations with the CAP unit in January 1969, Estes became embroiled in the Tet Offensive the following month. “The North Vietnamese would come out of the mountains and our job was to stop some of these enemy soldiers coming in, which could be very difficult,” he recalls. “Imagine you’re with ten Marines and a few Vietnamese, it’s pitch-black and the radio tells you that 600 NVA are coming through our area that night. All you can do is hide and pray that they don’t come in your direction.”

During the offensive, Estes was fighting with his best friend Robert Gregory. “Bob and I went through hell in the first few days. We were involved in a lot of combat and pulling the wounded out of the field. On one of these days there was another Marine squad that wasn’t part of our CAP unit but had come off a hill. They got into a firefight and radioed us to try to save them. When we arrived, there were some army personnel too, including a captain who was totally afraid. He didn’t know what to do because he had these soldiers, primarily Marines, who were lying in the middle of a rice paddy. Some were wounded; they were scared and didn’t know how to get out of there.

Estes and Gregory also noticed a wounded corpsman. “Bob and I said that we’d get him so we came out of a treeline and started crawling along the rice paddies. As we did, on the left of us were these disoriented Marines. We explained that if they crawled along the same way we were coming from then they could get to safety. On the other side was this wounded corpsman so Bob and I rolled over the rice dyke, which was not quite two feet high. We got to him but he had been wounded several times so we used battle dressings and put a tourniquet on his leg. We were doing all this lying on our stomachs and started to get a few rounds coming in.”

Gregory threw a grenade to distract the North Vietnamese before he and Estes tried to move the corpsman. “We were on our bellies and decided to get underneath him on each arm before rising up to our knees. This was because we’d have to jump to get him across the rice dyke.”

Despite their best efforts, Gregory and Estes were targeted. “We counted ‘One, two, three’ before we rose up. As we struggled to get over this dyke all the fire in the world happened. We were hit with heavy fire and it was just terrible. The corpsman got shot again and Bob was

© Alamy

shot in the shoulder, chest and arm. The latter became shattered, with bone sticking out, and the other Marines got hit. One was trying to crawl away and his foot was barely attached. They were all saying 'Help me' but I could only help one person."

Estes was unhurt and helped Gregory to safety. "I used battle dressings on Bob while lying prone and when I ran out of those I took off my boot and tied his shattered arm together with my sock. I then lay on my stomach and our heads were almost touching while I pulled him along. As I did, Bob got shot again in the butt and he said 'Just leave me.' I said, 'No, I'm not leaving you' and was able to get him out. He didn't die but he was severely wounded."

Although he had saved Gregory, the events of that day marked a turning point for Estes. "My feelings snapped in that firefight and I didn't care anymore. I couldn't feel anything, including fear, and I wasn't really angry. We'd have firefights at night, people would be killed or I would kill someone but I didn't care to see their bodies. I didn't have a conscious awareness that I was going to think that way, it just happened. I cared about Bob but I didn't develop any other friendships because at that time and I still had months [of the tour] to go."

Estes was eventually hospitalised with an infected wound in his forearm before he was flown back to the USA in August 1969. He left the Marines shortly afterwards and is the recipient of the Navy Commendation Medal and Purple Heart. He was still only 19 at the end of his military service.

Protests, PTSD and recovery

Estes returned home as a young married father but struggled with readapting to civilian life. "It was shocking. In Vietnam, I had been important in a way because I could call in artillery, gunships and move some troops around. I was powerful – I had the ability to kill but also to save people from dying. However, I was 19 and should really have been playing baseball.

> **"MY FEELINGS SNAPPED IN THAT FIREFIGHT AND I DIDN'T CARE ANYMORE"**

"I know a lot of people had it worse but for me it was tough. It was a difficult transition because I didn't have a job and worried about it. I finally did get a job but this was at the height of the anti-war movement. Thousands of people were protesting in downtown Portland and the school I attended was part of the state university. Students took over most of the campus and set up a big tent where they had all kinds of anti-war demonstrations."

As a Vietnam veteran, Estes was verbally abused by protesters. "It was disgusting to have people yelling how bad you were for having been a soldier. I'd see signs about how we were 'Baby Killers' and people carried naked baby dolls on a swinging pole that were covered in blood. It was assumed that was what we did in Vietnam but we didn't. I would say it was heart-breaking but by then I just felt incredible anger. That resentment against anti-war demonstrations was something that I felt went at part of my being – it was terrible."

Estes says the hostility from civilians "dramatically contributed to my PTSD. In the past, Native American warriors were cared for by their populations and WWII soldiers were honoured and loved. It didn't happen so much with Korea but the difference was that Vietnam veterans were the first generation that were vilified and hated. Some people would spit on or ridicule us. We were denied a lot and every kind of media portrayed us in a very bad light. We were the tip of the spear when it came to battling the disinformation and horrifying injustice that was directed towards us."

Estes' own PTSD symptoms would replicate what he had experienced in Vietnam. "I experienced too much combat but for the first few years I didn't realise I had PTSD – I just lived with it and through it. As a young husband and father I would walk through the house every night and check all the doors and windows just to make sure that there was no possible way to get into the house. I had a problem driving my car where I always took different routes home. This was because in Vietnam you couldn't follow a pattern for patrols. I'd be in the neighbourhood and think that some trees would be a great place for the enemy to hide. A hole in the ground would make me think of the hundreds of holes I'd dug in Vietnam. Everywhere I went I was very cautious of people following me. Even if I was in a restaurant with my family I'd always have my back to the wall so that nobody could sneak up."

Estes later remarried and his second wife helped him to cope with his PTSD while he had a successful career in commercial real estate. In 1993 the couple founded the Fallen Warriors Foundation, which had the aim of helping American veterans heal from their war experiences. It was with the foundation the Estes made the first of four visits back to Vietnam. "Our trip back was probably the most tumultuous time. When I was on the plane I had my wife and two young children with me but I felt like I was going to break apart as we approached Vietnam. It was an incredible event."

PEACE
TO
STEPS...
Stop
the
BRING THE GI's HOME NOW
YOUTH AGAINST WAR & FASCISM
BRING THE GI's HOME NOW
YOUTH AGAINST WAR & FASCISM
NG THE HOME OW
AGAINST FASCISM
BRING THE GI's HOME

Anti-Vietnam War protesters display their placards in front of the White House during a demonstration in Washington D.C.

© Getty

© Getty

An American soldier observes his surroundings in a burning Vietnamese village

Estes pictured aged 19 years old during his tour as a US Marine in Vietnam

The trips back were important steps towards recovery. “One of the quickest ways towards healing for someone with severe mental anguish is to help other people. On later trips I brought medical and educational supplies, including toys and computers for schools. I also led a group of disabled Vietnam veterans to get them back to their original point of pain. I then led a group of doctors and nurses and was able to get them to very remote villages. People would come for miles around and some had never even seen a doctor or nurse before. All in all, we had wonderful trips, great adventures, and it’s something that I’m very proud of.”

‘We tried our best’

The experience of Vietnam veterans proved to be a watershed moment in how PTSD was perceived. “It is a very real ailment and it doesn’t just impact soldiers. Our generation was feeling all these symptoms that would have been described as ‘battle fatigue’ during WWII. When it became defined, PTSD was personally considered shameful to veterans because they felt it was a weakness. It’s taken decades for that to change because people associated veterans suffering from PTSD with violence and the inability to live in a normal world.”

Estes has written that having PTSD should be regarded as a “badge of honour” to help veterans heal. “It shouldn’t be looked down upon but needs to be looked at as part of experiencing the horrific part of what it means to be a soldier defending your country. If you kill, see someone killed or have someone die in your arms it changes your life, so we need to honour those who have suffered.”

> “IF YOU KILL, SEE SOMEONE KILLED OR HAVE SOMEONE DIE IN YOUR ARMS IT CHANGES YOUR LIFE SO WE NEED TO HONOUR THOSE WHO HAVE SUFFERED”

Thanks to changing perceptions Estes is keen to emphasise that, whatever the controversy surrounding the Vietnam War, its veterans were largely unwilling but dutiful conscripts. “I want people to remember that most veterans were drafted (although I wasn’t) and were sent to Vietnam with the idea that we were defending our country. All of the other extraneous thoughts, feelings and reasoning can be put aside and broken down to this very true commonality. We went there, we fought, we were wounded and many died but – we tried our best. “

Since Vietnam, the United States has been involved in several major conflicts such as the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Estes believes that the respect this new generation of veterans receives from the public is partially due to the painful experience of their Vietnam predecessors. “We should have been welcomed back in a much better way than we were. However, I think soldiers are now and it’s because Vietnam veterans went through that hell of coming home and not being loved. It’s an honour to be a veteran today because people are proud of them. Of course, current Iraq and Afghanistan veterans have to deal with their own terrible experiences but they’re not vilified and treated like dirt. It was awful but I’m happy now because we’re treated much, much better.”

SEARCHING FOR GURNEY

Jack Estes has recently published a novel about the Vietnam War that explores the lives of veterans from both sides of the conflict

Searching for Gurney is Estes’ third book, which follows his memoir *A Field of Innocence* and first novel *A Soldier’s Son*. His second novel explores the journeys of three US Marines and one North Vietnamese soldier during the late 1960s and early 1970s. Each character’s story begins at a different time and place, with the Marines facing battles with PTSD and a hostile American public. For all of them, making sense of life after the war requires the utmost courage. Estes reveals why he wrote the book, the lengths to which he researched his characters and why writing has been a form of therapy.

WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO WRITE SEARCHING FOR GURNEY?

My third book is a fiction novel but a lot of it is based on the experiences of both myself and other soldiers that I met. As they say, all of it is true even though none of it really happened. I started work on it about 20 years ago and it had been written to the best of my ability at that time. Over the years I got rejected and needed to do a lot of improving on my fiction-writing skills. Now, everyone who has read it says it’s my best work and I’m pleased with that.

WAS WRITING THE NORTH VIETNAMESE CHARACTER OF VUONG CHALLENGING?

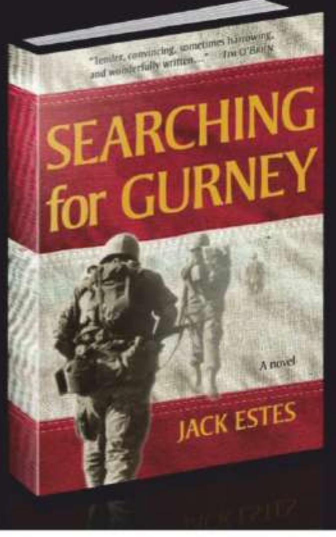
I went to Vietnam several times after the war and met many Vietnamese people. I actually went to Hanoi and met several North Vietnamese soldiers, including colonels. We exchanged stories through interpreters and they told me about some of the terrible things that had happened to them such as being hit with napalm and artillery. They gave me a lot of information and of course I did a lot of research on my own. It was difficult but I have a pretty good imagination.

TO WHAT EXTENT HAS WRITING ABOUT YOUR VIETNAM WAR EXPERIENCES BEEN A CATHARTIC PROCESS?

The war, no matter what people say or the therapy you are involved in, will stay with you in some degree for the rest of your life. I had some very big challenges with PTSD and so writing has been very cathartic. I used to say that I punched people out when I was younger but now I punch out my typewriter.

WHAT MESSAGE DO YOU HOPE READERS WILL TAKE FROM THE NOVEL?

I believe my purpose is to write about the war and honour the soldiers and their families. I think I do that through my writing and essays and that’s what I’ve based my life’s work on. Of course, I had a successful commercial career and if I didn’t have to work I probably would have written a lot more. But that’s what my goal is for readers – to honour American veterans and to help heal the pain associated with war.



SEARCHING FOR GURNEY CAN BE PURCHASED FROM AMAZON, BARNES & NOBLE AND ANNIE BLOOM’S BOOKS. FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT **WWW.JACKESTES.COM**

For links to American veteran PTSD resources and Jack Estes’ bibliography visit www.jackestes.com

STEPHEN BULL

A PHOTOGRAPHIC GUIDE TO CLOTHING, INSIGNIA AND KIT

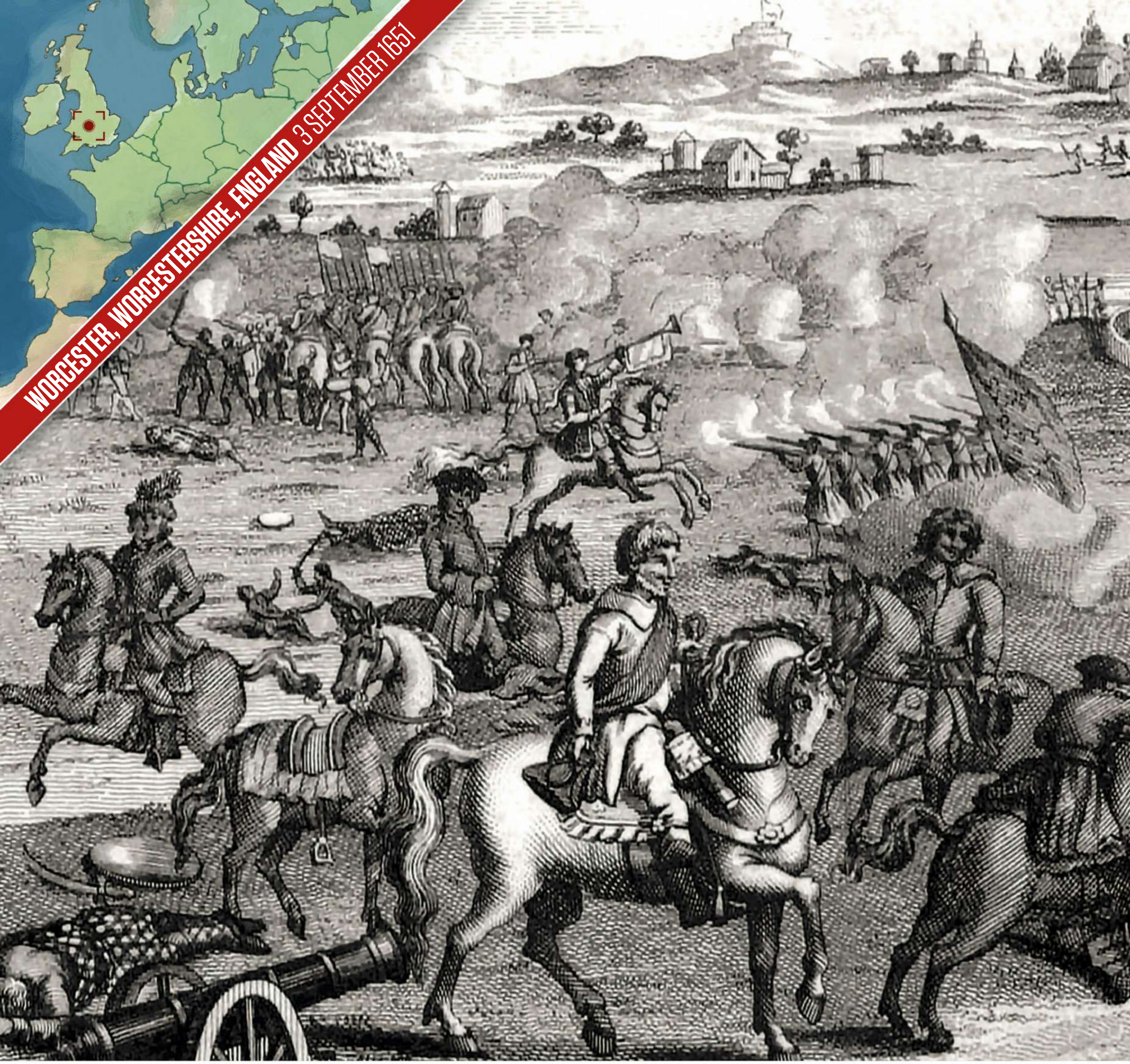
GERMAN ARMY
UNIFORMS OF WORLD WAR II

STEPHEN
BULL
A PHOTOGRAPHIC GUIDE TO CLOTHING, INSIGNIA AND KIT
GERMAN ARMY
UNIFORMS OF WORLD WAR II
OSPREY

Featuring a host of photographs from the author's collection, this is the illustrated story of how the appearance, personal weaponry and equipment of the German Army soldier evolved over nearly six bitter years of total war.

AVAILABLE TO ORDER FROM ALL GOOD BOOKSHOPS
AND ONLINE AT WWW.OSPREYPUBLISHING.COM

OSPREY
PUBLISHING



WORCESTER, WORCESTERSHIRE, ENGLAND 3 SEPTEMBER 1651

Great Battles

WORCESTER

The last battle of the British Civil Wars was proclaimed as a "crowning mercy" by Oliver Cromwell and "holy ground" by a future American president

WORDS **TOM GARNER**

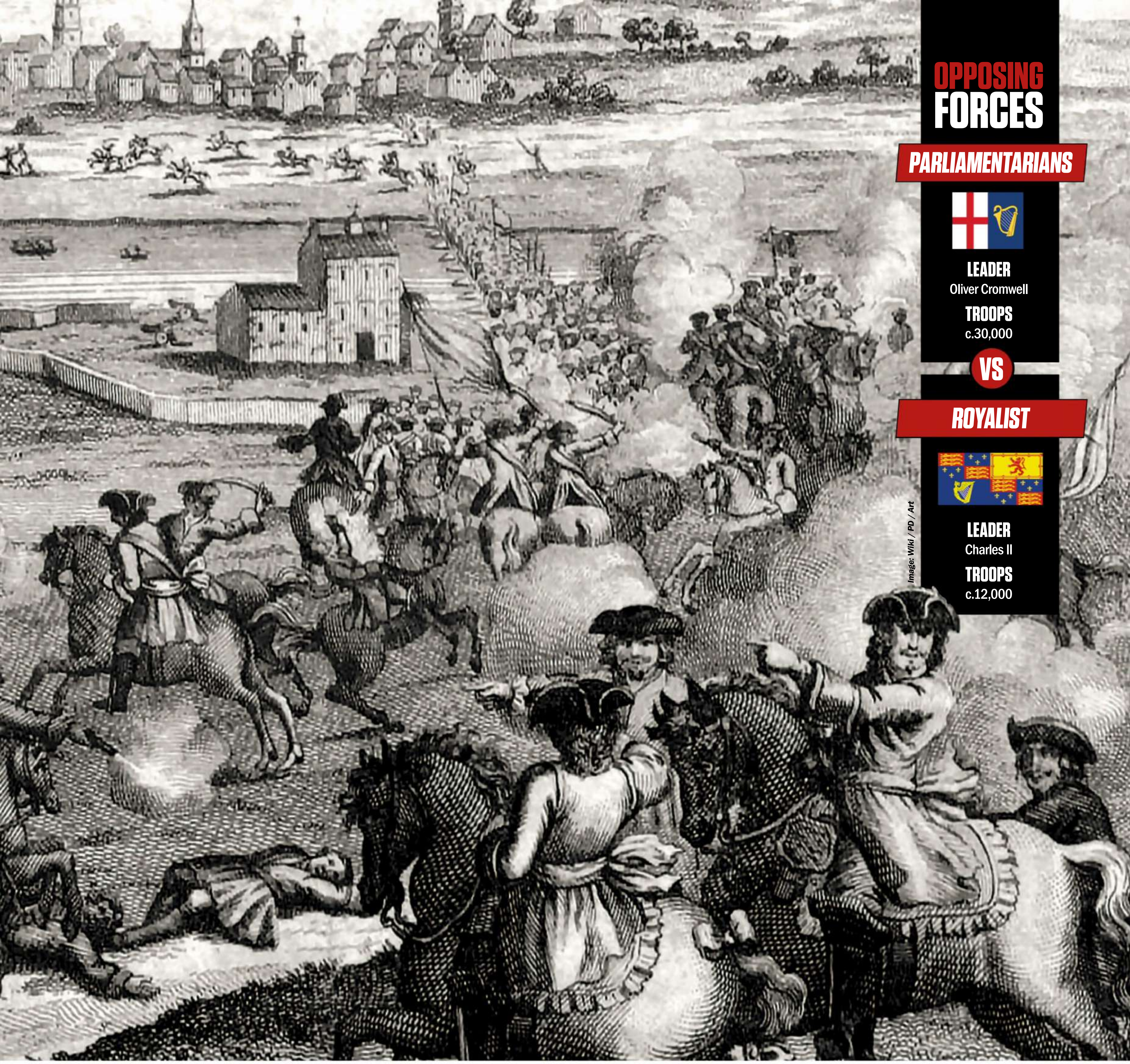


Image: Wiki / PD / Art

OPPOSING FORCES

PARLIAMENTARIANS

LEADER
Oliver Cromwell

TROOPS
c.30,000

VS

ROYALIST

LEADER
Charles II

TROOPS
c.12,000

***Above:** Parliamentarians and Royalists fight for control of the Rivers Severn and Teme, with the city of Worcester to the north*

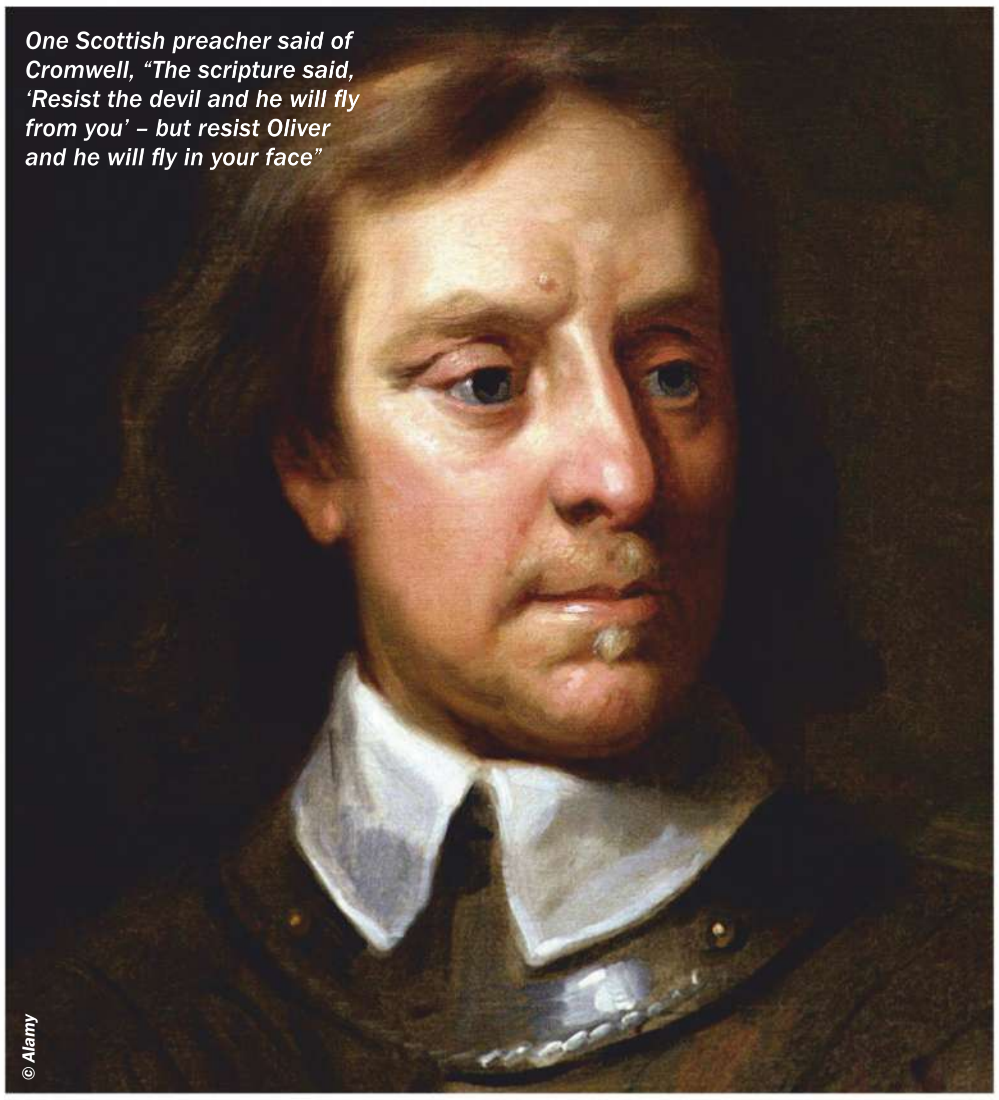
From 1642, the British Civil Wars consumed the Stuart dynasty's three kingdoms in a titanic struggle between king and parliament. The conflicts – which were proportionally the bloodiest in Britain's history – were fought across England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales but in 1651 they actually ended where they had begun nine years before. By this time, a king was dead, a republic had been proclaimed and the deceased monarch's heir had returned from exile to claim his kingdoms. This 21-year-old man – Charles II – was determined to fight England's regicidal parliament but he would have to confront one of Europe's greatest commanders in battle – Oliver Cromwell.

Covenanter kingmakers

The beheading of Charles I on 30 January 1649 was a shocking moment in British history. The trial and execution of a monarch by his own parliament was unprecedented and it was the climactic moment of two wars. The English Parliament abolished the monarchy and became a republican Commonwealth, but the British Civil Wars were far from over. Charles had been king of England, Scotland and Ireland but although they were unified by the Crown they were governed separately.

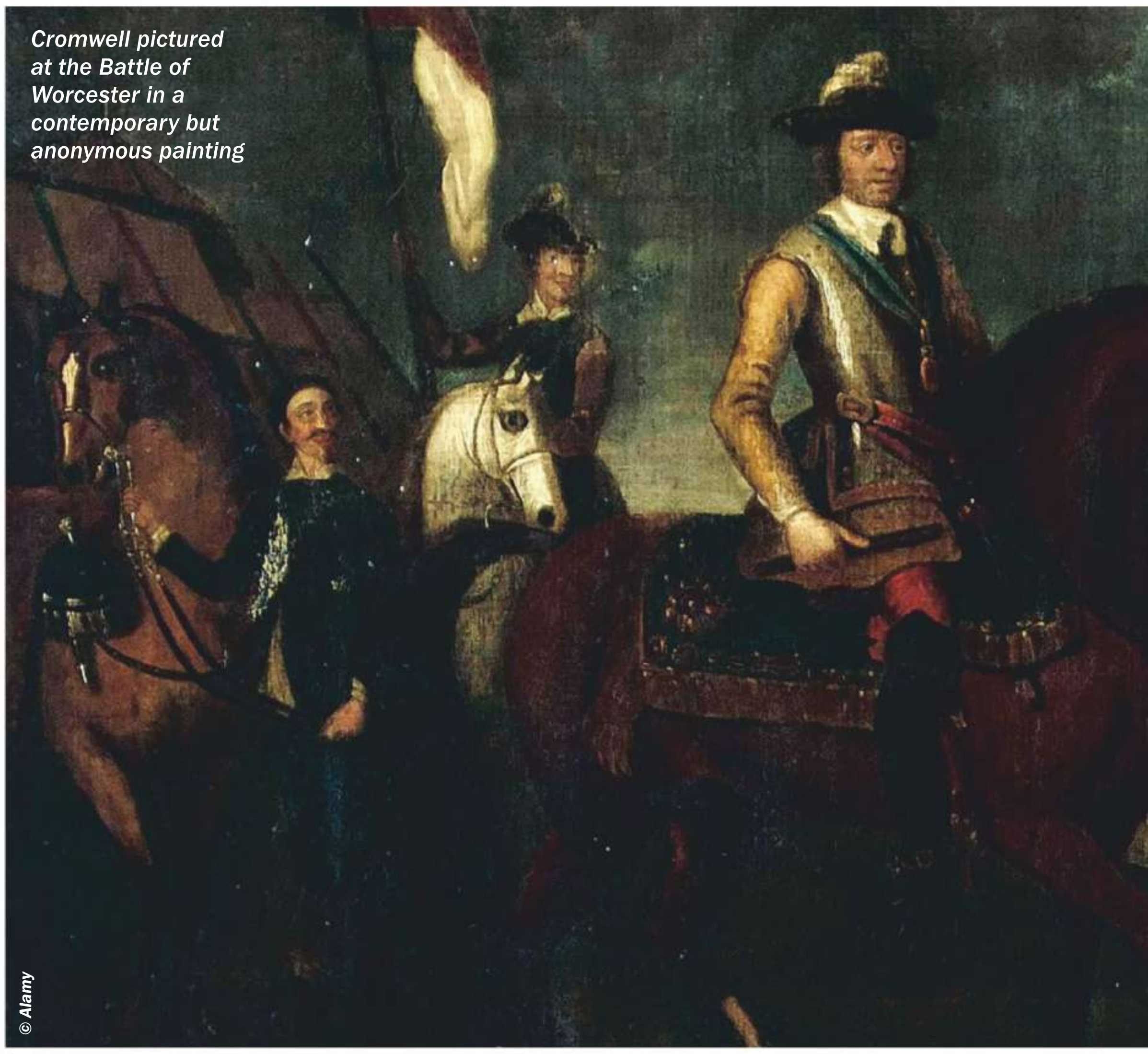
There had been a strong Royalist presence in Ireland and in August 1649 Oliver Cromwell led an expedition to crush Irish resistance. His notoriously bloody campaign was successful but there were greater problems emerging in Scotland. Scottish Presbyterians, known as Covenanters, had provided crucial support to the English Parliament during the first two Civil Wars but Charles I had been executed without their consultation. This angered the Covenanters whose own Scottish Parliament proclaimed the exiled Prince of Wales as Charles II on 5 February 1649.

The Covenanters proceeded to reluctantly join forces with Scottish Royalists, known as Engagers, and Charles II landed in Scotland on 23 June 1650. Charles had been proclaimed as the monarch of all three of his father's



One Scottish preacher said of Cromwell, "The scripture said, 'Resist the devil and he will fly from you' – but resist Oliver and he will fly in your face"

© Alamy



Cromwell pictured at the Battle of Worcester in a contemporary but anonymous painting

© Alamy

kingdoms but in reality only his Scottish throne was relatively secure. The Covenanters knew this and forced him to support Presbyterian governance across Britain. This move would have been extremely unpopular in predominantly Catholic Ireland and also England, where Charles was nominally the head of the Anglican Church. Charles himself despised having to submit to the Covenanters and decried their "villainy" and "hypocrisy".

Meanwhile, the Rump Parliament that had governed England since 1649 dispatched Cromwell, who had returned from Ireland, to invade Scotland. Cromwell's outnumbered New Model Army inflicted an unexpected, dramatic victory over the Scots at the Battle of Dunbar on 3 September 1650. His army went on to capture Edinburgh, which Cromwell called "a high act of the Lord's Providence".

Large parts of Scotland came under Commonwealth rule and Charles was so disheartened that he made a failed attempt to escape the Covenanters. Nevertheless, they crowned him as king of the Scots at Scone Abbey on 1 January 1651. Plans were then made to invade England and restore Charles to his English throne. This was highly unlikely from its inception because England was dominated by the New Model Army, which was one of the most successful armed forces in Europe. It was also headed by the formidable Cromwell, who had never lost a battle.

Invasion

Charles crossed the Anglo-Scottish border near Carlisle on 5 August 1651 with an army of 46 regiments that had been gathered from across Scotland. However, they only numbered approximately 11,000 men and were ill-equipped. Accompanying the king was Lieutenant General David Leslie, a former Covenanter ally of Cromwell's who had also been crushingly defeated by him at Dunbar. Leslie had advised against invading England but Charles overruled him.

"THE KING HOPED TO RECRUIT ENGLISH ROYALISTS AS HE MARCHED SOUTH BUT HE HAD BEEN DECLARED A TRAITOR BY PARLIAMENT"

The king hoped to recruit English Royalists as he marched south but he had been declared a traitor by Parliament and the only supporters who joined him were, according to the Council of State, "the scum of the people". There was initial panic among Parliamentarians at the invasion but the poor condition of the Scottish army turned English fear into contemptuous hostility. The duke of Hamilton, one of Charles's cavalry commanders, even wrote on the march that "people were laughing at the ridiculousness of our condition".

By contrast, the New Model Army was assembling with great efficiency to counter the Royalist threat. Cromwell marched south from the border through eastern England to prevent the Royalists reaching London. He also intended to gather a huge force to decisively defeat the Scots. Major General John Lambert's cavalry began harassing Charles's army from the rear while Major General Thomas Harrison's large force joined Lambert near Bolton, Lancashire, on 13 August 1651.

These two commanders represented the meritocratic system that made the New Model Army so successful. Both men had been lawyers, with Harrison being the son of a butcher. They were implacably opposed to Charles and when their forces linked up another Parliamentarian commander wrote, "Both Major Generals will march night and day until they get to [the Scots]."

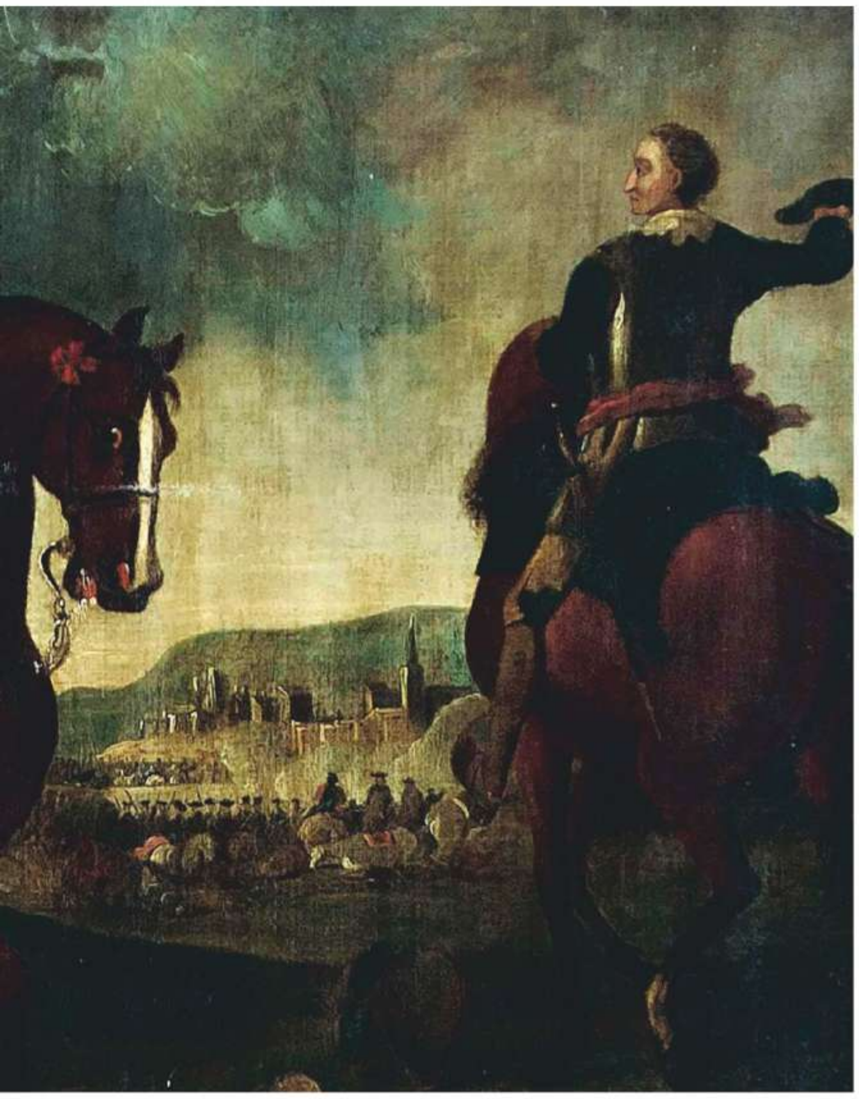
Elsewhere, Major General Charles Fleetwood gathered other Parliamentarian soldiers and militiamen in London and the Home Counties, while another contingent advanced from Bristol. They converged in the centre of England at Warwick, where they came under Cromwell's full command. This combined army possibly numbered over 30,000 soldiers and was one of the largest military forces ever assembled in England at that time.

Charles's route to London was cut off and a retreat back to Scotland was blocked by a second Parliamentarian force commanded by Colonel Robert Lilburne. Despite the ragtag nature of his army, the king was a disciplinarian and even executed a couple of looters. However, his numerical inferiority, lack of supplies and strategic surrounding by Cromwell meant that he had to make a stand. Defending a town or city was better than risking an open battle and so the Scots, who were now advancing through the Midlands, made for the most suitable base: Worcester.

An encircled city

In 1651, Worcester was relatively wealthy and had been the last English Royalist city to surrender to Parliament in July 1646 during the First English Civil War. Its 500-strong Parliamentarian garrison fled or surrendered when the Scots arrived on 22 August 1651 and Charles was proclaimed as king by the mayor and led through the city. However, a local Royalist muster only resulted in 60 cavalrymen.

After marching for 300 miles, the Scots briefly rested but Charles realised that the city's walled fortifications were inadequate. He ordered his men to build outer defences,



including a redoubt to the southeast called Fort Royal Hill. However, on 25 August, 1,000 Royalist reinforcements commanded by the earl of Derby where defeated by Colonel Lilburne in Lancashire. Any hopes that the Scottish invasion could be successful were dashed and on 28 August the huge New Model Army arrived outside the city.

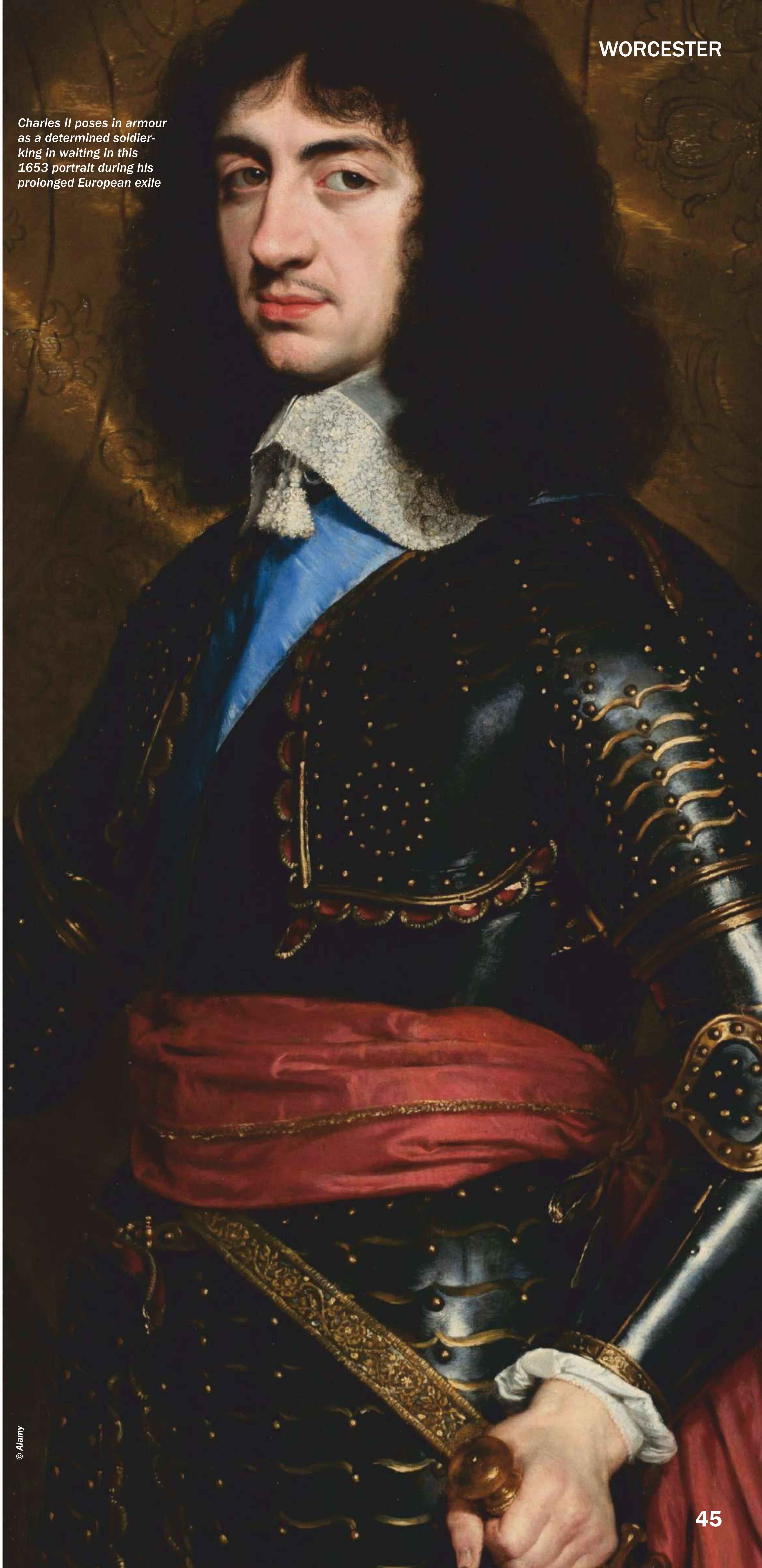
With such numerical superiority, Cromwell was confident of a Parliamentarian victory and issued orders for his commanders in northern England to capture retreating enemy troops – regardless of whether they actually made a stand at Worcester. Meanwhile, Charles attempted to stop the Parliamentarians from settling outside the walls but a night attack of 1,500 cavalrymen from the city gates was betrayed by an informant and defeated.

Cromwell decided to encircle Worcester, with Lambert discovering an undemolished bridge over the River Severn, six miles south of the city. An engagement was fought at the bridge at Upton-upon-Severn on 28 August, and Lambert's troops inflicted heavy casualties. This cut off any reinforcements Charles might have received from pro-Royalist Wales and western England.

In the wake of Lambert's success, Major General Fleetwood crossed the Severn with 11,000 soldiers. His intention was to attack Worcester from the south while the main portion of the New Model Army and its artillery were positioned east of the city at Red Hill and Perry Wood. Cromwell's force was split in two by the rivers Severn and Teme but pontoons over both waterways would maintain contact.

A "stiff contest"

Over the next few days, the two sides uneasily watched each over the walls of Worcester. Cromwell was in no hurry but Charles's surrounded army was becoming increasingly



Charles II poses in armour as a determined soldier-king in waiting in this 1653 portrait during his prolonged European exile

© Alamy

isolated. At dawn on 3 September 1651, Charles took personal command of his forces and observed the Parliamentarians from the tower of Worcester's medieval cathedral. It was a clear day and he was able to see Fleetwood's troops advancing along the Severn's west bank hauling "great boats" that would make the pontoons.

The king watched helplessly as the Parliamentarians took hours to drag the pontoons to their positions. In the early afternoon of 3 September, the Parliamentarian Major General Richard Deane attacked Powick Bridge on the western confluence of the Teme to divert attention away from the pontoons' construction. The Royalist western defences were stoutly defended by the Scots, including a regiment of Highlanders. Deane was unable to cross Powick Bridge and although Fleetwood's men crossed the Teme on their pontoons, the Highlanders initially drove them back.

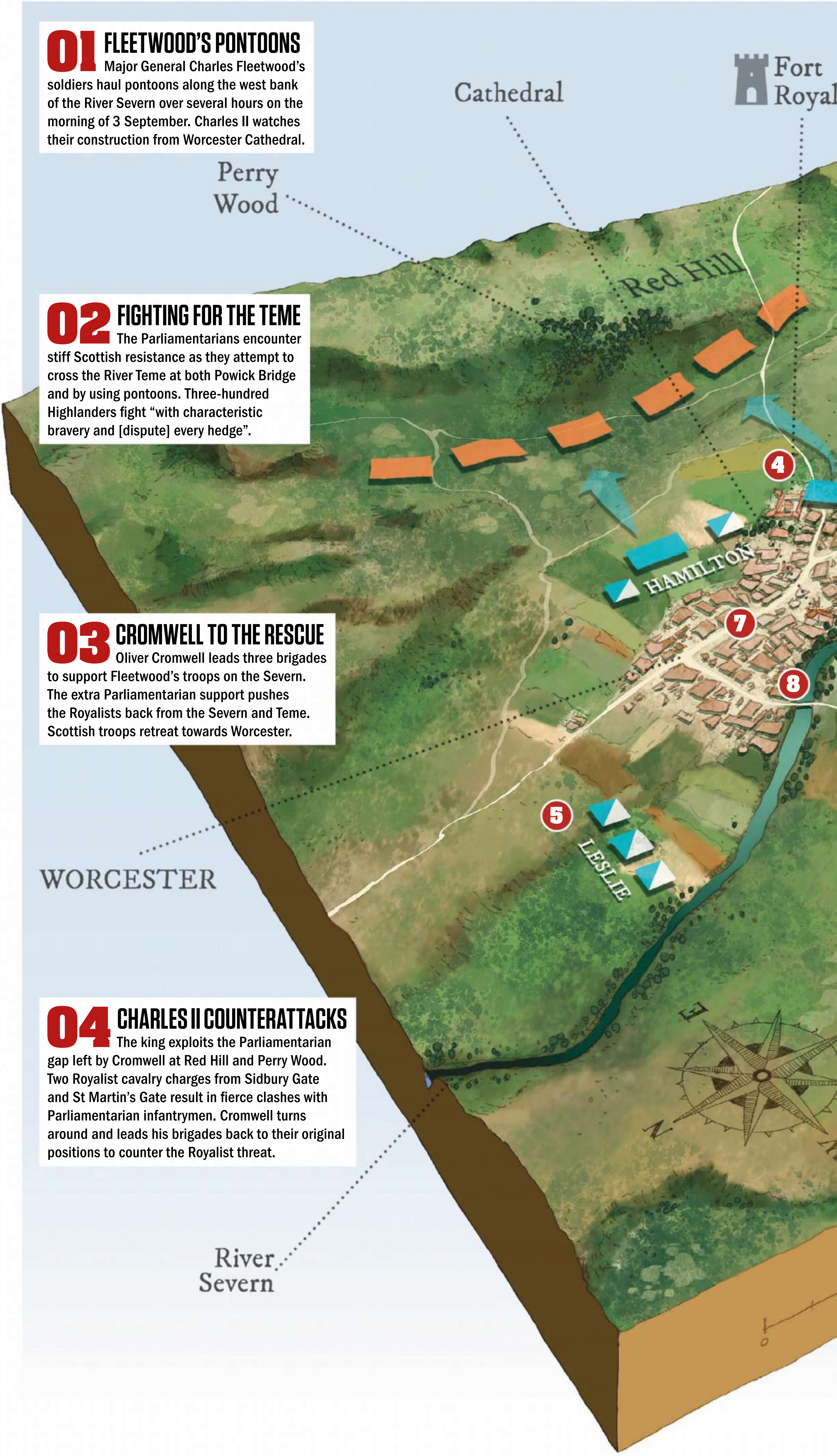
Cromwell observed this faltering start to the battle and personally led three brigades across the Severn's pontoons to support Fleetwood. Against this attack, the Highlanders fell back from the Teme while Deane crossed Powick Bridge on his second attempt. The Parliamentarians now held the north bank of the Teme and the Scots fled back towards Worcester. Several Royalist commanders were killed or wounded in this retreat but their overall position was not entirely hopeless.

Cromwell's rush to the pontoons had weakened the eastern Parliamentarian positions at Red Hill and Perry Wood. Charles saw this from the cathedral tower and rushed down to gather his troops for a two-pronged attack east of the city. To the southwest, Deane's guns pounded Worcester's defences but Charles "behaved himself very gallantly" with a cavalry charge against Red Hill while Hamilton's horsemen attacked Perry Wood. The Royalists swept out of Sidbury Gate and St Martin's Gate and the Parliamentarian infantry line faltered.

Despite the New Model Army's numerical superiority the battle hung in the balance, but Cromwell wheeled his own brigades around to throw the Royalists back into Worcester. He later recalled that the battle was "as stiff a contest for four or five hours as I have ever seen", while Charles's courageous leadership led to him being dismounted as his men withdrew into the city.

The Royalists' moment to turn the battle was largely lost because Leslie's 3,000-strong cavalry did not move from their northern position of Pitchcroft outside Worcester. Leslie's own morale was low and a Royalist reported of his cavalrymen that "neither threats nor entreaty could persuade them to charge with His Majesty". Leslie's pessimism cost the Royalists dear, with Hamilton being mortally wounded during the retreat back into the city.

Cromwell was now winning the battle and on the Parliamentarian left flank Fleetwood's men forced more Royalists back into Worcester. The Scottish infantry were noticeably brave and were seen "fighting with the butt-ends of their muskets when their ammunition was spent". On the southeast edge of the city, Fort Royal was stormed and captured by Parliamentarian militiamen who then used the captured Royalist cannons to fire into the streets.



01 FLEETWOOD'S PONTOONS

Major General Charles Fleetwood's soldiers haul pontoons along the west bank of the River Severn over several hours on the morning of 3 September. Charles II watches their construction from Worcester Cathedral.

02 FIGHTING FOR THE TEME

The Parliamentarians encounter stiff Scottish resistance as they attempt to cross the River Teme at both Powick Bridge and by using pontoons. Three-hundred Highlanders fight "with characteristic bravery and [dispute] every hedge".

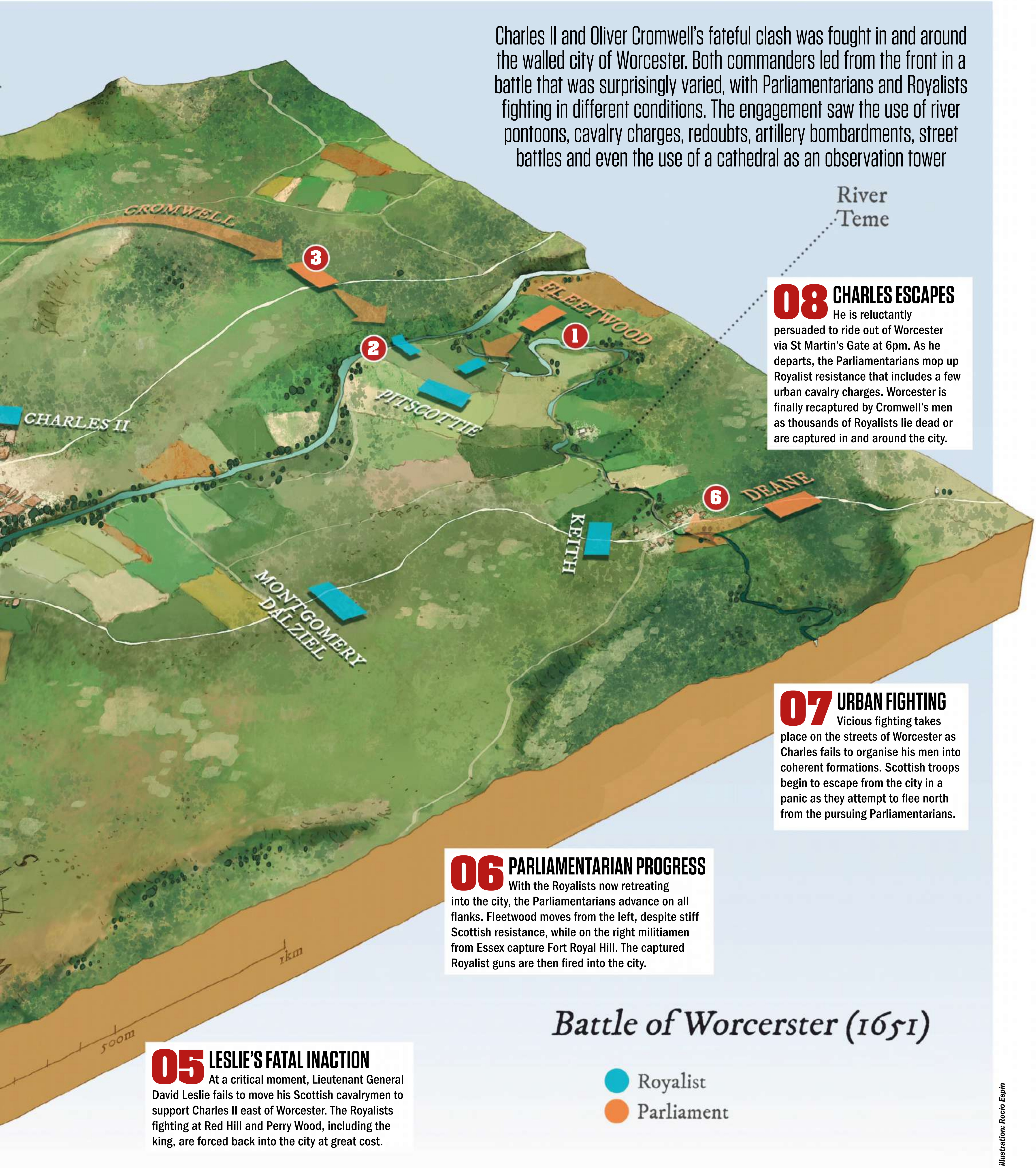
03 CROMWELL TO THE RESCUE

Oliver Cromwell leads three brigades to support Fleetwood's troops on the Severn. The extra Parliamentarian support pushes the Royalists back from the Severn and Teme. Scottish troops retreat towards Worcester.

04 CHARLES II COUNTERATTACKS

The king exploits the Parliamentarian gap left by Cromwell at Red Hill and Perry Wood. Two Royalist cavalry charges from Sidbury Gate and St Martin's Gate result in fierce clashes with Parliamentarian infantrymen. Cromwell turns around and leads his brigades back to their original positions to counter the Royalist threat.

Charles II and Oliver Cromwell's fateful clash was fought in and around the walled city of Worcester. Both commanders led from the front in a battle that was surprisingly varied, with Parliamentarians and Royalists fighting in different conditions. The engagement saw the use of river pontoons, cavalry charges, redoubts, artillery bombardments, street battles and even the use of a cathedral as an observation tower



05 LESLIE'S FATAL INACTION

At a critical moment, Lieutenant General David Leslie fails to move his Scottish cavalrymen to support Charles II east of Worcester. The Royalists fighting at Red Hill and Perry Wood, including the king, are forced back into the city at great cost.

06 PARLIAMENTARIAN PROGRESS

With the Royalists now retreating into the city, the Parliamentarians advance on all flanks. Fleetwood moves from the left, despite stiff Scottish resistance, while on the right militiamen from Essex capture Fort Royal Hill. The captured Royalist guns are then fired into the city.

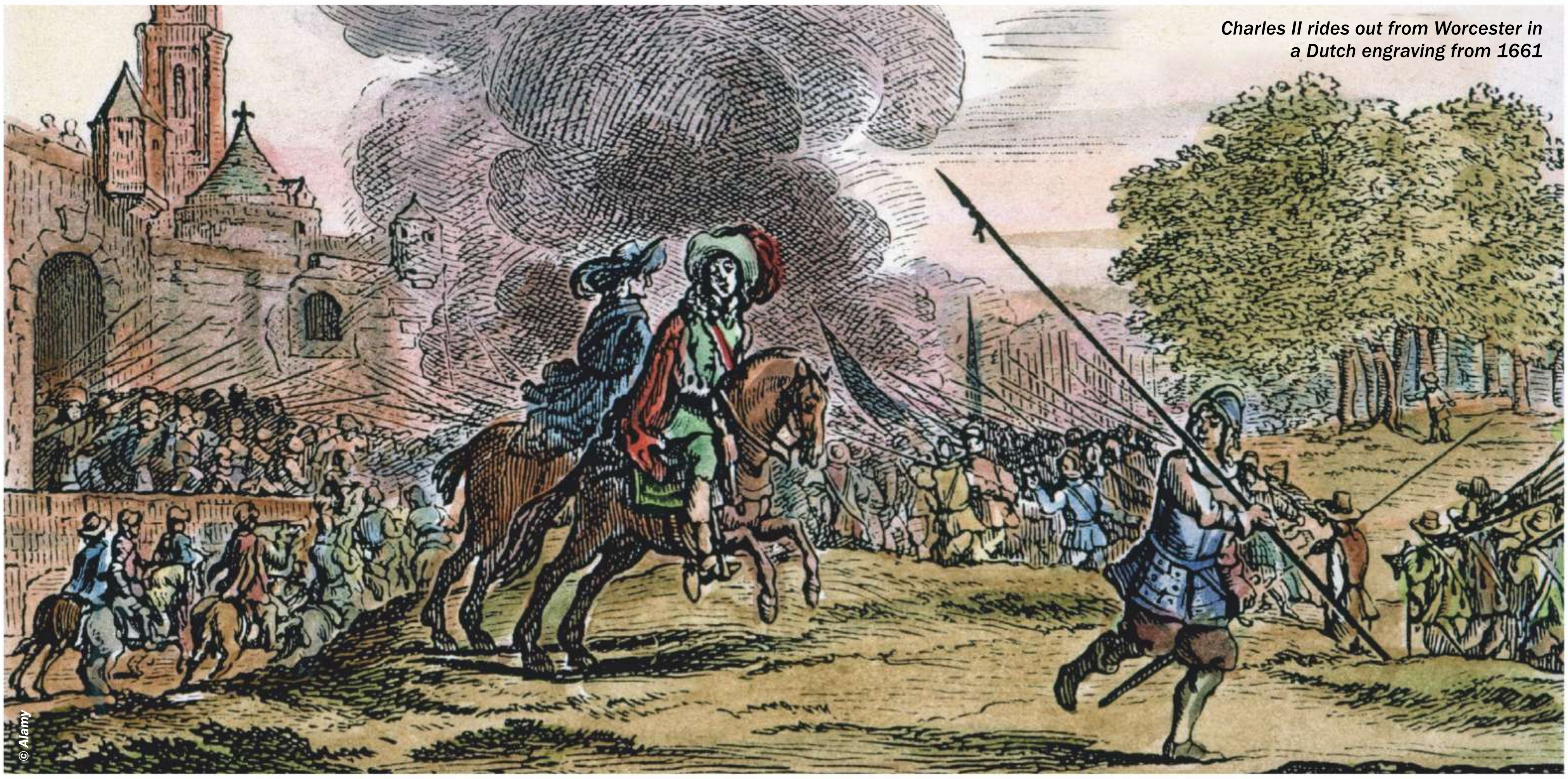
07 URBAN FIGHTING

Vicious fighting takes place on the streets of Worcester as Charles fails to organise his men into coherent formations. Scottish troops begin to escape from the city in a panic as they attempt to flee north from the pursuing Parliamentarians.

08 CHARLES ESCAPES

He is reluctantly persuaded to ride out of Worcester via St Martin's Gate at 6pm. As he departs, the Parliamentarians mop up Royalist resistance that includes a few urban cavalry charges. Worcester is finally recaptured by Cromwell's men as thousands of Royalists lie dead or are captured in and around the city.

Map Illustration: Rocio Espin



Charles II rides out from Worcester in a Dutch engraving from 1661

© Alamy

Charles found a new horse inside Worcester and tried to rally his panicked men, saying, “I had rather you would shoot me than keep me alive to see the sad consequences of this fatal day!” But the king’s plea was in vain as the Scots looked for ways to escape the city and flee north. One survivor recorded that soldiers trampled “one upon another [and were] much readier to cut each other’s throat than to defend themselves against the enemy”.

Still determined to make a stand, Charles had to be persuaded to leave the city. As he was about to depart from his headquarters, he was reputedly forced to abandon his papers and run from the back door when a Parliamentarian colonel burst through the front. The king rode out of Worcester through St Martin’s Gate at six o’clock in the evening with the battle now well and truly lost. However, his courage was not in question as a Royalist prisoner later observed, “What became of His Majesty afterwards I know not, but God preserve him, for certainly a more gallant prince was never born.”

What the prisoner did not know was that Charles was about to embark on an epic adventure to escape England. With a price on his head of £1,000, he was relentlessly pursued by Cromwell’s troops for over a month. With the assistance of underground English Royalists, the king successfully hid in several houses and even – most famously – a tree in Shropshire that became known as the Royal Oak. He also wore various disguises as he travelled through several counties before he finally escaped by sea from Shoreham, West Sussex, on 15 October 1651.

The vast majority of his soldiers were not so fortunate. While Charles was leaving Worcester, the Parliamentarians picked off small Royalist cavalry charges in the streets and eliminated pockets of resistance until the city was taken. One inhabitant wrote, “Dead bodies lay in the way from Powick Bridge to the town. Many lie killed in the houses, in the college and church, on the green, and in the cloisters and quite through Sidbury and about a mile that way.”

Forgotten “Liberty”

Up to 3,000 Scots were killed during the battle, with another 10,000 captured both in combat and as they tried to flee back to Scotland. Many prisoners became indentured servants in the Caribbean while, by contrast, the Parliamentarians only lost approximately 200 men. With the Royalist threat completely crushed, the British Civil Wars were finally over. Cromwell, who had fought Worcester exactly one year after Dunbar, wrote to the Speaker of the House of Commons and called his victory “a crowning mercy”, His power was immeasurably strengthened and from 1653 he ruled Britain unopposed as Lord Protector until his death in 1658.

In a historic irony, Worcester had also been the scene of the conflict’s very first engagement at Powick Bridge in September 1642. The coincidence was not lost on Cromwell’s chaplain Hugh Peter, who told the victorious New Model Army after the battle, “When your wives and children shall ask where you have been, and what news: say you have been at Worcester, where England’s sorrows began, and where they are happily ended.”

“WHERE ENGLAND’S SORROWS BEGAN, AND WHERE THEY ARE HAPPILY ENDED”

A memorial to the Battle of Worcester on the site of Fort Royal near the city centre

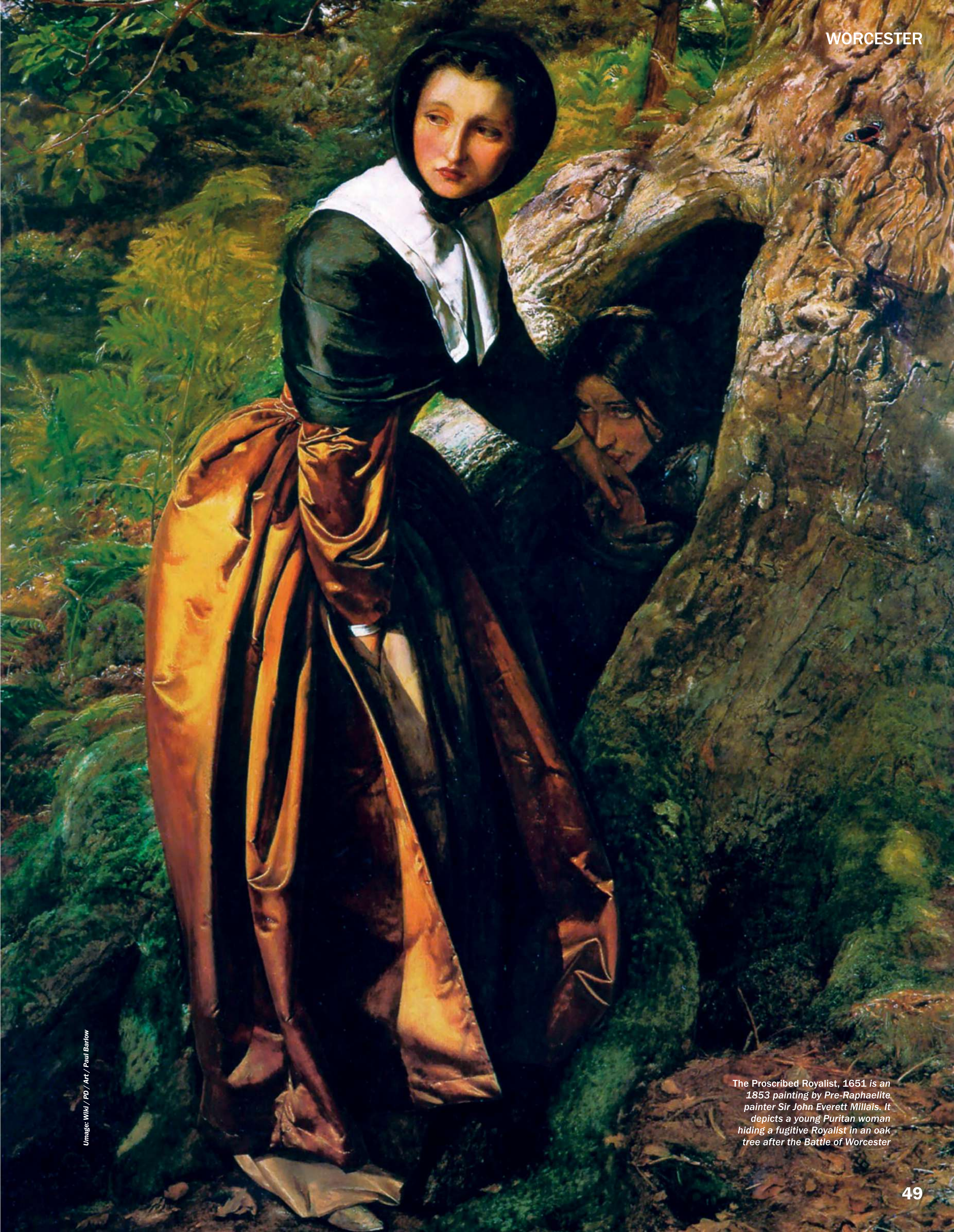
RAISED BY THE BATTLE OF WORCESTER SOCIETY & WORCESTER CITY COUNCIL 3 SEPTEMBER 2013

© Alamy

After his escape, Charles spent years in exile living at various European courts before he returned to England at Parliament’s invitation for his Restoration in 1660. It appeared as though the Civil Wars had ultimately swung in the Royalists’ favour but Worcester still had far-reaching consequences.

The battle entrenched the power of England’s parliament and even Charles’s restoration could not prevent it becoming fully sovereign over the monarchy by 1688. Parliament’s victory was also remembered by future revolutionaries who found inspiration in its intellectual militarism. The New Model Army had birthed several political movements, including the Levellers who advocated unprecedented forms of extended suffrage, equality before the law and religious tolerance. These ideas were so revolutionary that even Cromwell felt forced to crush them. Nevertheless, their ideas lived on – particularly in the New World.

The American Revolution had its roots in this 17th century English radicalism and the legacy of the Civil Wars was not lost on the Founding Fathers. In April 1786, the future American presidents John Adams and Thomas Jefferson visited Worcester a few years after the United States had gained independence from Britain. Adams later wrote a moving entry in his diary about his visit to Fort Royal: “Worcester [was] curious and interesting to us, as scenes where freemen had fought for their rights. The people in the neighbourhood appeared so ignorant and careless at Worcester that I was provoked and asked, ‘And do Englishmen so forget the ground where Liberty was fought for? Tell your neighbours and your children that this is holy ground, much holier than that on which your churches stand. All England should come in Pilgrimage to this Hill, once a year.’”



The Proscribed Royalist, 1651 *is an 1853 painting by Pre-Raphaelite painter Sir John Everett Millais. It depicts a young Puritan woman hiding a fugitive Royalist in an oak tree after the Battle of Worcester*

Umage: Wiki / PD / Art / Paul Barlow

CLOSING DATE 31.03.21

SUBSCRIBE TODAY AND SAVE UP TO 60%

BRITAIN'S BEST MILITARY HISTORY MAGAZINE
HISTORY of WAR
IS-3 HEAVY TANK
Soviet monster that shocked the West
DAWN OF GAS WARFARE
How chemical weapons changed the face of the Western Front
YPRES
BLACK PRINCE'S BLOODY VICTORY
England's triumph at Poitiers
14TH ARMY'S UNSUNG AFRICANS
Forgotten Burma veterans
1943 SICILY INVASION
OPERATION HUSKY
BURMA VETERAN
SIEGE OF BELGRADE
How Ottoman ambitions were crushed by Hungarian grit
FREE WWI eBOOK DOWNLOAD
DID THE 93RD HIGHLANDERS SAVE
THIN RED LINE
FROM VIETNAM TO THE BLACK PANTHERS
Veteran's civil rights battle
MEDAL OF HONOR
Deadly Tet Offensive crossfire
INSIDE HITLER'S BOMBER FLEET
How Luftwaffe aircraft were designed for destruction
"FIRE BOMBS LIT UP THE SKY"
Coventry Blitz survivors share their stories of courage
BLOODY APRIL FIGHTER
STALIN'S SPITFIRE
Inside the Yak-9 fighter
DESERT STORM
Triumph of the 36-army coalition

Visit www.magazinesdirect.com/war/jandps or call

0330 333 1113 & quote JANDPS

BRITAIN'S BEST MILITARY HISTORY MAGAZINE
HISTORY of WAR
CHURCHILL TANK
Backbone of Britain's armoured assault
RISE OF THE AFRIKA KORPS
How did Rommel outwit British commanders and reverse the doomed Axis campaign?
BATTLE OF WORCESTER
Charles II and Cromwell clash in the final battle of the English Civil War
TEENAGE VC HERO
In the final 1918 push, one Private risked his life for his comrades
MARINE'S PTSD BATTLE
Vietnam veteran shares the struggles returning troops faced

REASONS TO SUBSCRIBE...

- ✪ You'll never miss an issue
- ✪ It's delivered direct to your front door
- ✪ Brilliant value – save money on the cover price
- ✪ Upgrade to print & digital from just £2.50

TIP OF THE SPEAR
LIFE AFTER VIETNAM
CHURCHILL TANK

6 MONTHS PRINT EDITION

£16.90 every 6 months

13 issues of History of War in print over 12 months and save 50%

PRINT & DIGITAL EDITION BUNDLE

£11.90 every quarter

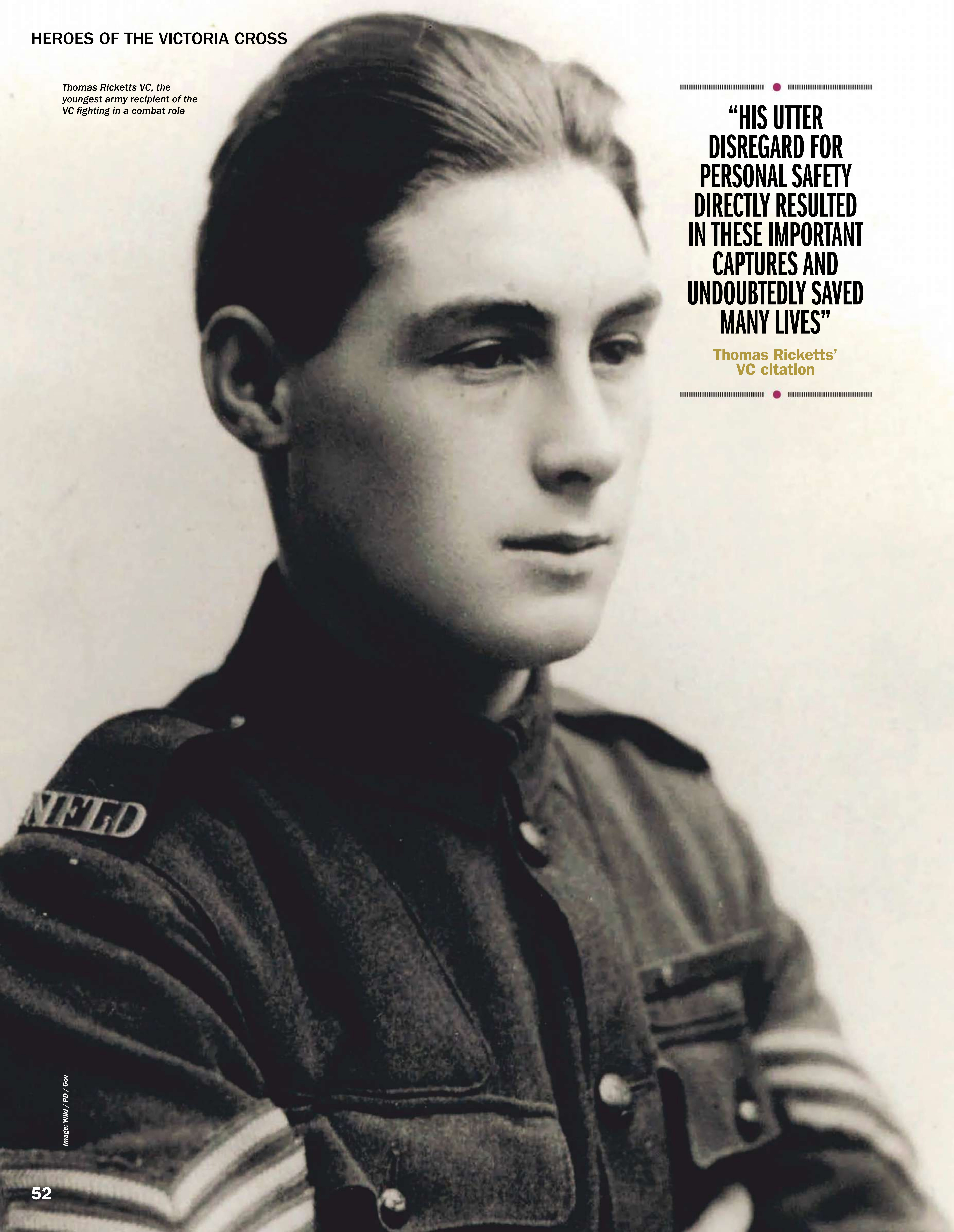
13 issues of History of War in print and digital over 12 months and save 60%

DIGITAL ONLY EDITION

£7.15 every quarter

13 issues of History of War in digital over 12 months and save 44%

***Terms and conditions:** Offer closes 31 March 2021. Offer open to new UK subscribers only. Pricing is guaranteed for the first 12 months and we will notify you in advance of any price changes. Please allow up to six weeks for delivery of your first subscription issue (up to eight weeks overseas). The full subscription rate is for 12 months (13 issues) and includes postage and packaging. If the magazine ordered changes frequency per annum, we will honour the number of issues paid for, not the term of the subscription. For full terms and conditions, visit www.magazinesdirect.com/terms. For enquiries please call: +44 (0) 330 333 1113. Lines are open Monday- Friday 9am-5pm UK Time or email: help@magazinesdirect.com. Calls to 0330 numbers will be charged at no more than a national landline call, and may be included in your phone provider's call bundle.



Thomas Ricketts VC, the youngest army recipient of the VC fighting in a combat role

> **“HIS UTTER DISREGARD FOR PERSONAL SAFETY DIRECTLY RESULTED IN THESE IMPORTANT CAPTURES AND UNDOUBTEDLY SAVED MANY LIVES”**
>
> **Thomas Ricketts’ VC citation**

Image: Wiki / PD / Gov

Heroes of the Victoria Cross

THOMAS RICKETTS

In late-1918, with the Allies pushing closer to victory, a 17-year-old soldier braved heavy fire to capture several prisoners and an array of guns

WORDS **CHARLES GINGER**

Another bullet punctures the mud just inches away from Private Thomas Ricketts' head as the German guns ahead continue to fire at the Allied soldiers closing in on their position. Tasked with defending four field guns, they're desperate to prevent the silhouettes darting around their flank from getting any closer. Ricketts' breathing comes in snatches, his heart hammering in his chest as he prepares to make another short dash across open ground. Beside him lies his accomplice on this suicidal mission, Lance Corporal Matthew Brazil. Together they will either succeed in capturing the German artillery or die in the attempt. After all, they volunteered for this.

By 1918, the village of Ledegem, once a peaceful outpost in northwest Belgium, was a shattered skeleton, a landscape cratered by artillery shells, the humps of pillboxes squatting between crumpled buildings and farmhouses. On the morning of 14 October, Allied troops found themselves hunched on the outskirts of the village. They were awaiting the order to advance in a thrust north that would form a small part of a larger attack – this would come to be known as the Hundred Days Offensive, which finally ended the Great War.

Among the nervous soldiers was Private Thomas Ricketts, a teenager from Newfoundland. He had lied about his age in 1916, stating that he was 18 when in fact he was 15 (remarkably was not asked to provide proof) in order to sign up. He had been assigned to B Company of the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment (renamed the Royal Newfoundland Regiment in January 1918). Embarking from St John's on 31 January 1917 aboard SS Florizel, Ricketts sailed to Nova Scotia to await his transfer across the Atlantic to Britain, where he was reunited with his brother, George.

Ricketts saw action at the Battle of Cambrai, the first to feature the large-scale deployment of tanks

© Getty

Despite receiving the necessary training required to fight, Ricketts wasn't sent to the frontline immediately, instead finding himself helping to excavate infantry tracks through the viscous mud of Flanders. However, he wouldn't have to wait long to experience combat.

On 16 August 1917 Ricketts went over the top at the Battle of Langemarck. This grueling engagement resulted in 62,000 casualties but did eventually lead to territorial gains for the Allies. Fortunately for Ricketts, he emerged from the carnage unscathed. The teenager would be equally lucky on 9 October when the Newfoundlanders participated in the Battle of Poelcapelle, though suffering horrendous losses. However, Ricketts' fortune would not hold for long.

Ordered to advance at the Battle of Cambrai in November, Ricketts took a bullet to the thigh in the early exchanges of a clash that would last for over a fortnight. Initially the German lines buckled, but gradually they solidified and what had at first seemed like a struggle destined to end in another Allied breakthrough soon turned into a disaster. It would prove to be a personally devastating battle for Ricketts.

On 3 December the Newfoundlanders were straining to hold their lines when the enemy unleashed a barrage of mortar and artillery fire that decimated their section. Among the many broken bodies scattered along the trench was that of George Ricketts, although his remains were never located nor identified. Ricketts' leg injury had almost certainly saved him from dying alongside his brother.

Returning to action in April 1918 after four months spent convalescing in Britain, Ricketts joined a badly mauled battalion that had paid a catastrophic price for its part in halting the final major German offensive of the war. Like Ricketts, it too would need time to gather its strength for the battles to come. By October they were plunged back into the fighting. The prospect of final victory and peace was painfully close, but the Germans were still putting up dogged resistance.

Having struggled through the early morning mist (which actually helped the Allies as the German machine gunners were unable to shoot with any degree of accuracy) and cleared out numerous German pillboxes around Ledegem, the Newfoundlanders, under the command of Captain Sydney Frost, stopped outside the hamlet of Neerhof to reorganise and then push on. A deafening roar split the air as a nearby German battery opened fire on the already exhausted men.

Pressing on under relentless fire, which was joined by German mortars and machine guns, the men of the battalion began to fall. The survivors gathered at the foot of a slope at the top of which, dug in between two farmhouses, stood four German artillery guns and four machine guns. A head-long rush up the hill would be suicide – the enemy would have to be flanked. Ricketts and Lance Corporal Matthew Brazil immediately stepped forward to take on the ominous task.

Armed with a Lewis light machine gun and a Lee Enfield rifle respectively, and loaded with extra ammunition, the pair moved in brief bursts across open ground, drawing fire from the enemy machine guns and artillery as well as a sniper secreted somewhere nearby.

Firing bursts at the German position as they moved, Ricketts and Brazil managed to get within 300 metres of the guns. Bracing themselves, they readied to make another dash when they realised that at some point they'd dropped the ammunition they'd been carrying. Exposed to relentless gunfire and soon to be without any means of returning it, they were staring death in the face. To compound their desperate situation, the Germans quickly exploited the opportunity to start hauling their guns away to safety. It was at this moment that Ricketts would make a life-changing decision.

Scrambling back to find the lost ammunition while Brazil maintained covering fire, Ricketts recovered the bullets and then darted back to reload his gun, attracting heavy gunfire as he went, shells and bullets smashing into the ground around him. By the time he reached his weapon Brazil had moved forwards. Fumbling the cases into the magazine and steadying his aim, Ricketts began to fire on the German position with unerring accuracy, hitting several of the soldiers defending the artillery and forcing the rest to flee for cover.

Pursuing the retreating survivors to a farmhouse, Ricketts carefully slipped inside with his gun poised to fire and took eight men captive. With the support of Brazil, he'd neutralised an enemy position that had threatened to slaughter every last man in his

An abandoned tank hunches at the side of a rain-soaked track in Poelcapelle, the site of an inconclusive battle that claimed over 40,000 casualties

© Alamy

battalion and prevented his prisoners from escaping, all while being assailed with bullets and mortar shells. Incredibly, he followed up this remarkable act of bravery by seizing a fifth gun and additional prisoners when some German troops (who must have been hiding nearby) suddenly attempted to drag their weapon to safety on the back of a wagon. Recounting the events of that fateful day in 1919 during an interview with the *Evening Telegram*, Ricketts was characteristically understated: "The way it was with me was that I was determined that I would this time get them or they would get me."

A few days after the successful assault Captain Frost wrote a recommendation for Ricketts to be awarded the Victoria Cross for his actions, a request that was eventually granted once a second officer corroborated Frost's account.

Having survived the rest of the war, in January 1919 Ricketts was informed that he could return to Britain before being shipped home to Canada. King George V, upon learning of Ricketts' impending arrival, invited him to a private meeting at his residence on Sandringham Estate on the 19th. In the presence of a number of royals, Ricketts received his medal from the king himself, the grateful monarch pinning it to his chest before proudly informing the room: "This is the youngest VC in the army." Ricketts would later recall his meeting with the king (and a rather nervous conversation in which they discussed Newfoundland and caribou antlers while Ricketts sweated over providing "sensible replies") as "one of the most pleasant experiences of my life".

With his military career now behind him, Ricketts returned to his education, dedicating himself to the study of pharmaceuticals. In time he would open his own pharmacy in St John's, but that was the extent of his public endeavours. Whenever someone asked to interview him or take his photo Ricketts would politely decline, becoming ever more private with age. Poor health would trouble him throughout the rest of his life, and on 10 February 1967, at the age of 65, Ricketts suffered a fatal heart attack while working in his store. In recognition for his wartime achievements, he was granted a state funeral before being laid to rest in the grounds of St John's Anglican Church. A memorial outside his store has ensured that, in the minds of future generations, his memory will live on.

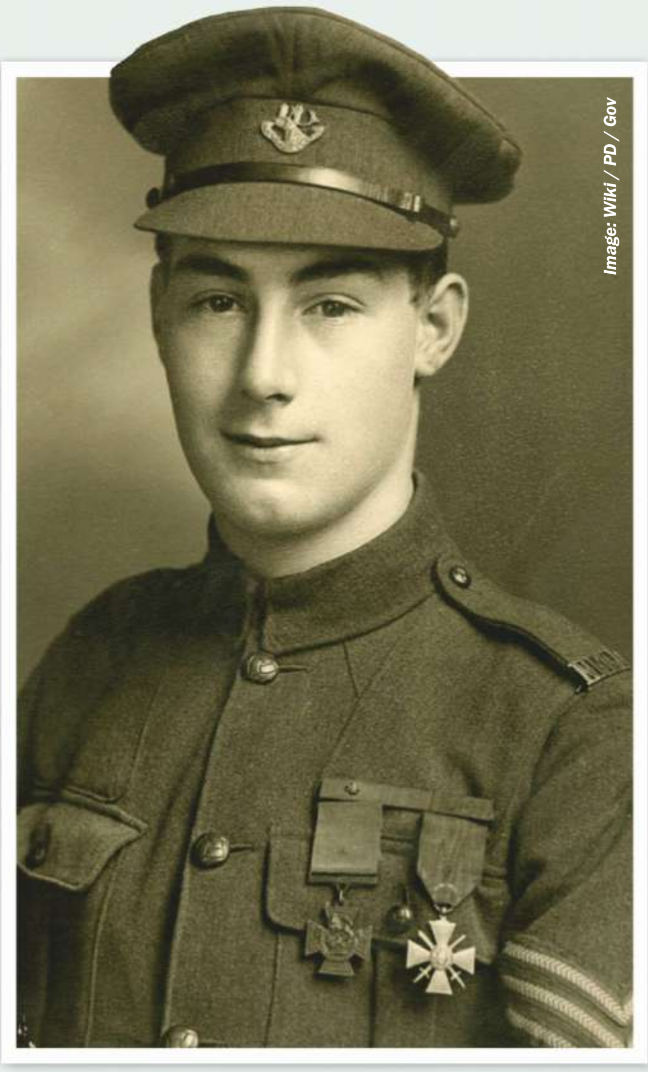
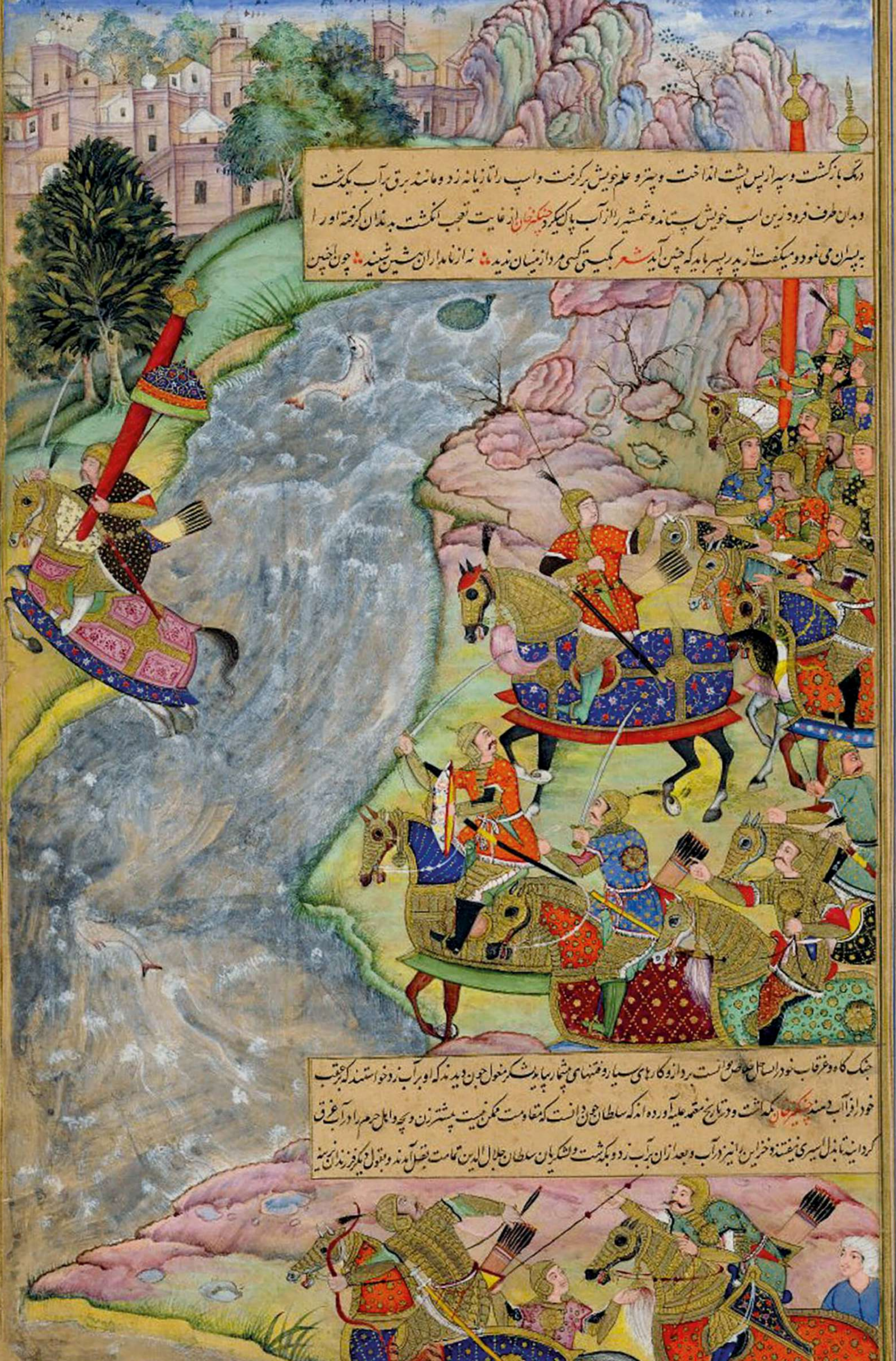


Image: Wiki / PD / Gov

Above: After the Great War Ricketts ran a pharmacy in St John's, Newfoundland

"YESTERDAY I GAVE THE VC TO PRIVATE RICKETTS, NEWFOUNDLAND REGIMENT, WHO IS ONLY 17½ NOW, A SPLENDID BOY"

A note made by King George V in his private diary



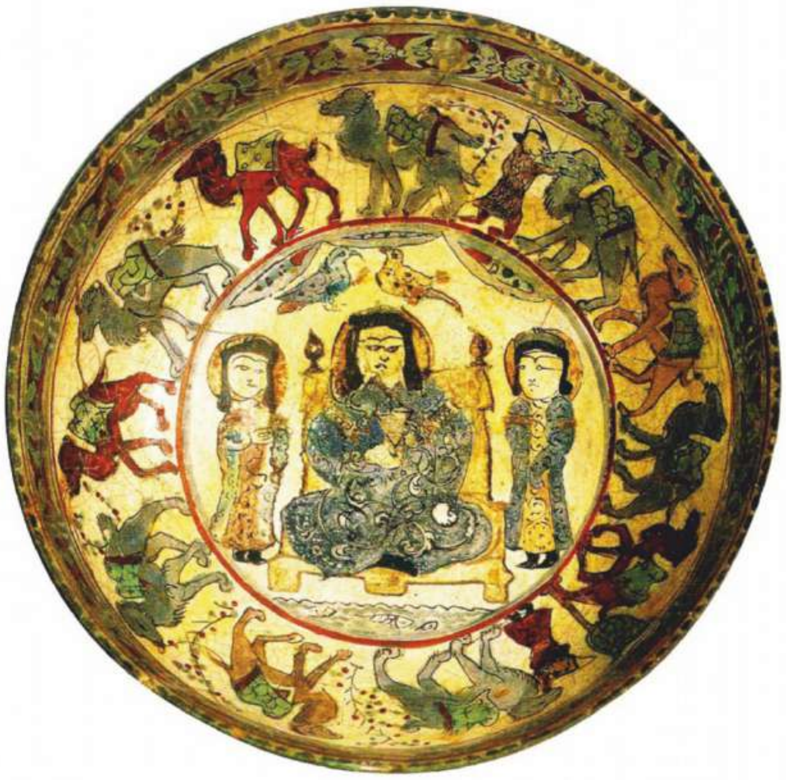
درنگ بازگشت و سپر از پس پشت انداخت و چتر و علم خویش برگرفت و اسپ را تازیانه زد و مانند برق بر آب بگذشت
و بدان طرف فرود زین اسپ خویش بستاند و شمشیر را از آب پاک میکرد چنگیز خان از غایت تعجب انگشت بدندان گرفته او را
به پسران می نمود و میگفت از پدر پسر باید که چنین آید شعر بگیتی کسی مرد زین سان ندید ٭ نه از نامداران پیشین شنید ٭ چون اینچنین

جنگ گاه و غرقاب خود را به ساحل خلاص توانست برد از کارهای بسیار و فتنهای بیشمار پادشاه لشکر مغول چون دیدند که او بر آب زد خواستند که عقب
خود از آب زنند چنگیز خان نگذاشت و در تاریخ معتمد علیه آورده اند که سلطان چون دانست که مقاومت ممکن نیست بیشتر زن و بچه و اهل حرم را در آب غرق
گردانید تا بذل اسیری نیفتند و خزاین را نیز در آب زد و بگذشت و لشکریان سلطان جلال الدین تمامت بقتل آمدند و مغول دیگر فرزندان سینه

Images: Alamy unless otherwise stated

CRUSHING KHWAREZMIA

The Mongols' first campaign against the Muslim world set a precedent: surrender or die



WORDS **HARETH AL BUSTANI**

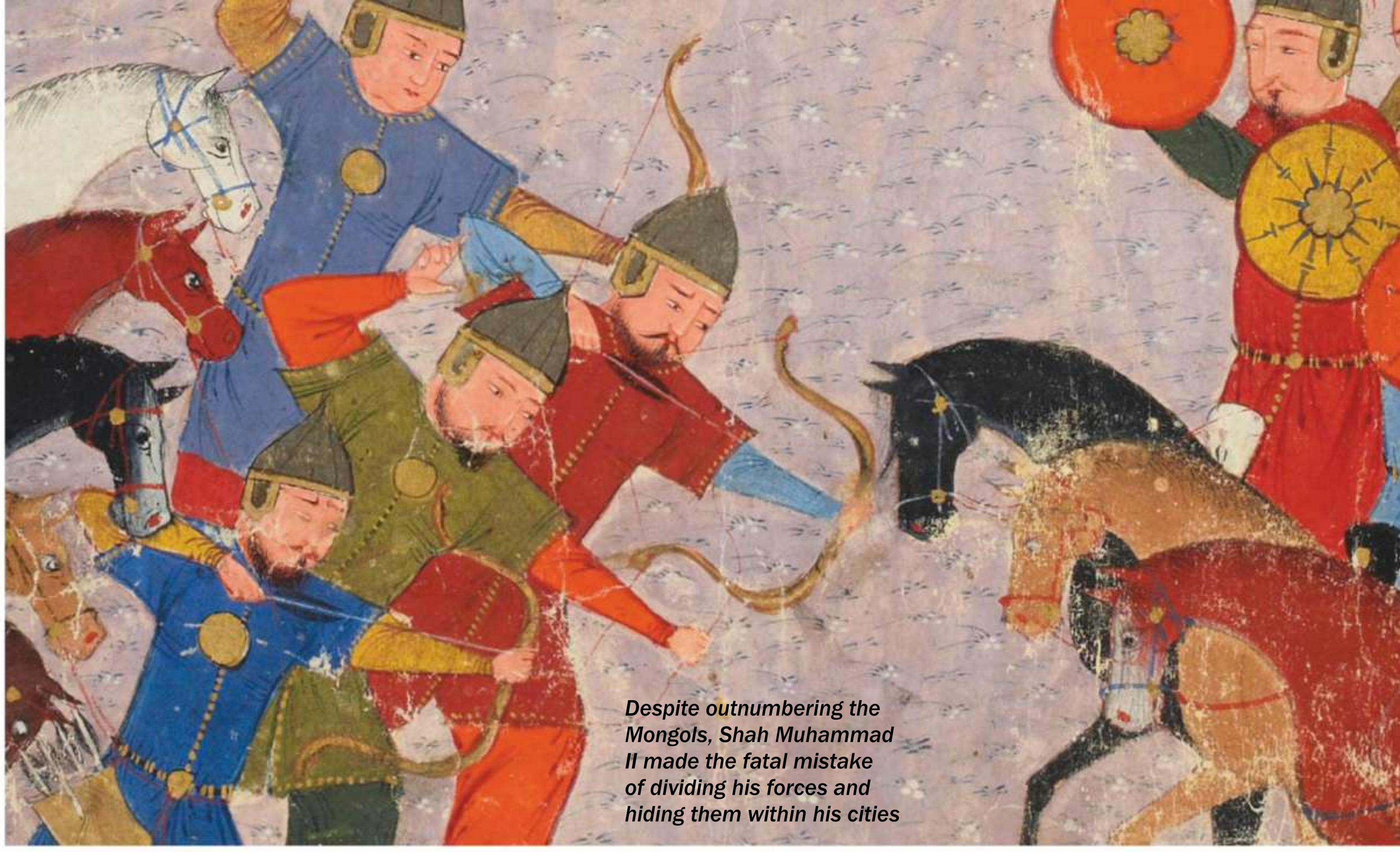
At the turn of the 13th century the once-mighty Seljuk Empire fractured, leaving the Muslim world in a power vacuum. While the caliph's Abbasid dynasty, centred in Baghdad, enjoyed a brief resurgence, so too did another, further east in Central Asia. With a realm spanning Persia, Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and Russia, the Khwarezmian Empire had grown into a Central Asian superpower. The ruler, or shah, Ala Al Din Muhammad, was an ambitious man who not only refused to capitulate to the caliph's authority but dreamed of subjecting the caliph to his. First, however, he would have to break free from the yoke of the neighbouring Qara Khitai Empire of eastern Turkestan. In 1210, after defeating the rival power of Samarkand, he moved his capital there and then turned his attention back to the caliph, pushing all the way to Iran's westernmost reaches.

Muhammad's fortunes were further bolstered by chaos in the rival Qara Khitai Empire. After being forced from his lands by the Mongols, a noble from another tribe took shelter among the Qara Khitai nobility, only to instigate a coup. His brief, intolerant and oppressive rule so terrified his Muslim populace that they appealed to the Mongols for help. Happy to oblige, Genghis Khan sent in 20,000 soldiers – welcomed as liberators – and their enemy was crucified on the gates of Kashgar's main mosque, mirroring his treatment of the city's imam. In the process the Mongols had pushed their western border all the way to the Khwarezmian Empire.

When the Jin capital of Beijing also fell to the Mongols, the Khwarezmians sent an embassy to Genghis in an attempt to establish diplomatic and trade relations. Looking over a white hill, one of the Khwarezmian envoys supposedly asked what it was, only to be told it was a pile of bones. He

***Left:** The Mongol conquest of Khwarezmia was an overwhelming campaign of subterfuge, strategy and terror*

***Above:** This tray depicts a Khwarezmian ruler flanked by two females. The empire's proud royals were brought to heel by Genghis Khan*



Despite outnumbering the Mongols, Shah Muhammad II made the fatal mistake of dividing his forces and hiding them within his cities

heard how 60,000 virgins threw themselves off a wall to escape the Mongol wrath. Elsewhere, roads were covered in grease from human fat, and the air was so noxious some of the delegates were alleged to have died.

The Mongols were intrigued by their new neighbours. They knew the Khwarezmians produced excellent steel and armour, and Genghis always studied potential rivals obsessively. Keen to find out more, in 1218 he sent a trade mission to the Khwarezmian frontier post of Utrar with the message, "I am the sovereign of the sunrise, and thou the sovereign of the sunset." There, however, they fell out of favour with the local governor, who accused them of harbouring spies, and had them executed. While his accusation was most likely fair, such an egregious act was an insult the proud Mongols could not bear. To make matters worse, when Genghis sent three more ambassadors to procure an apology, one was killed and the other two had their beards shaved off. Genghis, who saw himself as the defender of 'Eternal Heaven on Earth', viewed this as a crime against heaven itself. One account describes how he climbed a hill and prayed for three days and nights before declaring, "I was not the author of this trouble; grant me strength to exact vengeance."

Fearing a long and protracted war against a powerful foe, Genghis began gathering an enormous army of Mongols, Chinese, Karluks and Uyghur Muslims. While he was impatient to annihilate his belligerent neighbours, the khan never embarked on conquests of this scale without carefully observing his enemies. Mongol agents flooded west, picking up gossip at markets and merchant caravans. As the information trickled back, it soon became apparent that despite the steely facade, all was not well in Khwarezmia.

"CHAGATAI AND ÖGEDEI SEIZED THE OFFENDING GOVERNOR AND KILLED HIM BY POURING MOLTEN GOLD DOWN HIS THROAT"

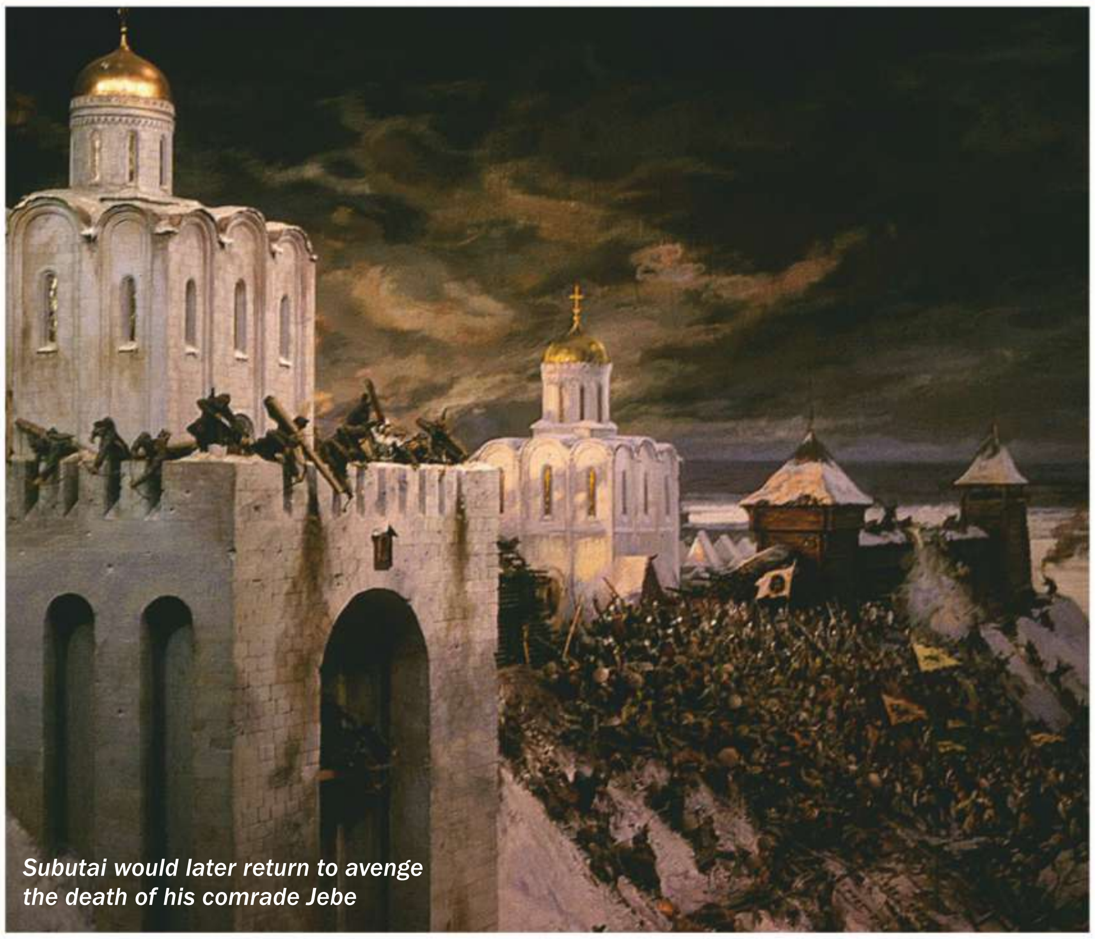
THE GREAT CAVALRY RAID

From Khwarezmia, Jebe and Subutai embarked on one of the most remarkable reconnaissance missions of all time

When Shah Muhammad fled from Merv, Genghis' captains Jebe and Subutai chased him down with 40,000 men, riding up to 130km a day, wearing out their horses only to leap onto their spares and exhaust them too. They captured the shah's mother and harem, seized his crown jewels and even defeated an army of 30,000 at Rai before finally chasing the shah over the Caspian Sea. For their relentless war against the shah they were imagined in Europe as Christian crusaders, with Genghis as King David. Christendom was in for a shock.

From their base in Azerbaijan, Jebe and Subutai raided Georgia and defeated an army of 10,000, critically wounding the king himself. They later rode over the Caucasus Mountains, led over the Derbent Pass by local guides, into the clutches of a Kipchaq army, bolstered with Khwarezmian refugees backed by a coalition of Alans, Lezgins and Cherkesses. Outnumbered, Subutai remarkably appealed to the Kipchaqs as kindred spirits, convincing them to leave the alliance only to ambush and destroy them later near the River Don.

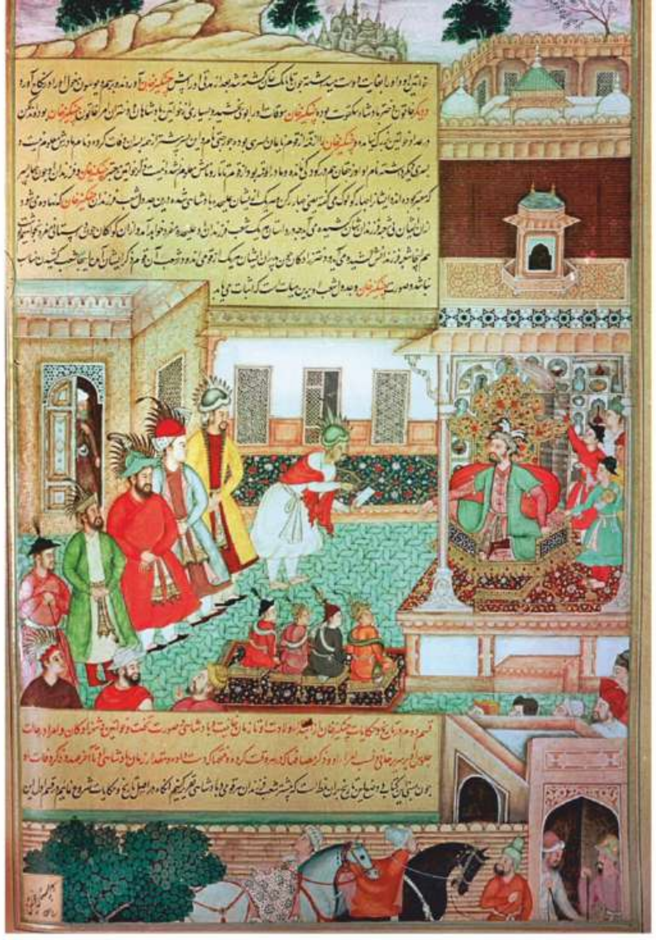
"FOR THEIR RELENTLESS WAR AGAINST THE SHAH THEY WERE IMAGINED IN EUROPE AS CHRISTIAN CRUSADERS, WITH GENGHIS AS KING DAVID. CHRISTENDOM WAS IN FOR A SHOCK"



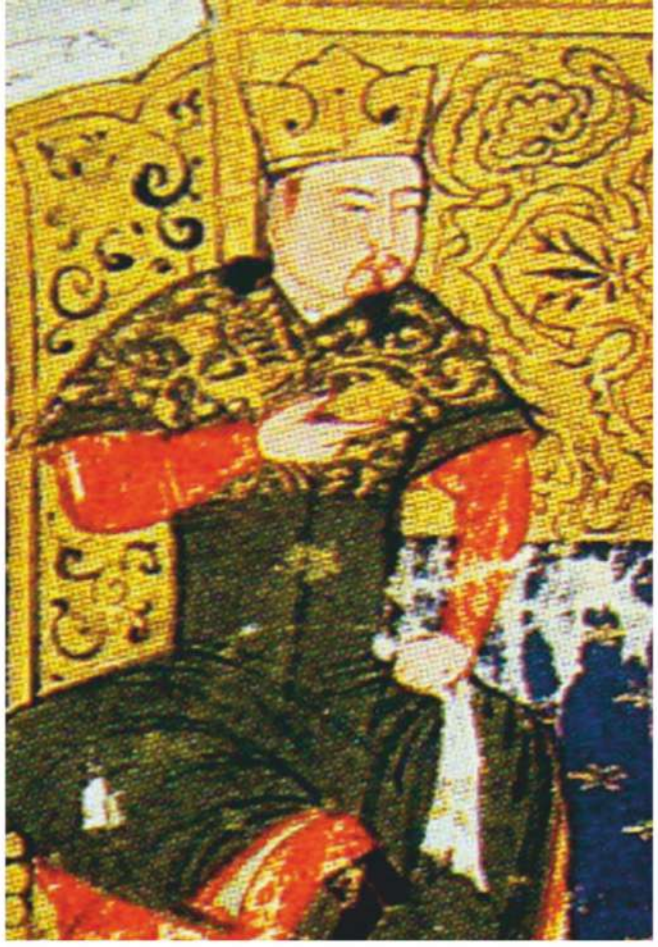
Subutai would later return to avenge the death of his comrade Jebe

They went on to raid the Crimean Peninsula, capturing the Genoan trading port of Sudak, where, having traversed a quarter of the globe, Jebe may have become the best-travelled soldier of all time. On their way home, they once again ran into the Kipchaqs, this time with a coalition of princes from Kiev, Galacia and Chernigov – all called Mstislav – with a gargantuan army of 90,000 men. The Mongols feigned an epic retreat for ten days before suddenly turning and smashing the enemy. To avoid shedding royal blood, the Mongols had the princes crushed to death beneath wooden planks.

Further northeast, they crossed over the Volga to attack the Bulgars, but having been whittled away by so much conflict were ambushed and defeated. Although Jebe himself may have died in this battle, Subutai would avenge the defeat in 1237 during the second Mongol invasion of Europe.



Images: Alamy unless otherwise stated



Far left: *Genghis and his sons Jochi, Chagatai, Ögedei and Tolui struck the Khwarezmian Empire seemingly from all directions at once*

Left: *Tolui (seated on a gilded throne) served with distinction in Khwarezmia*

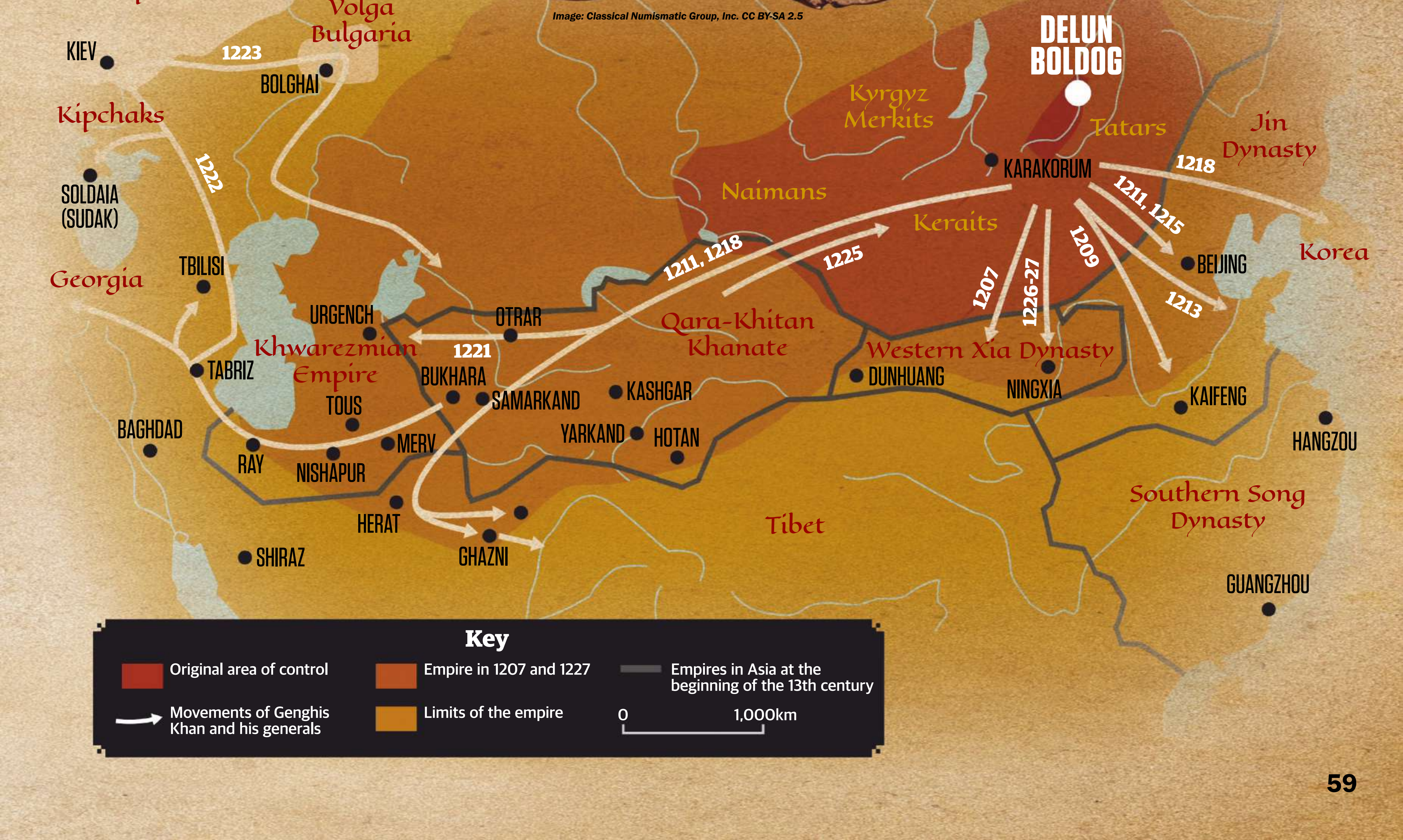
Having made an enemy of the caliph, Shah Muhammad eroded much of his goodwill among his Muslim populace, alienating them. Moreover, with an empire sprawling Iran, Afghanistan and Transoxiana, there were deep divisions between his own Persian supporters and those of his mother, mainly Qangli and Qipchaq Turks from the north. The Turkish ruling class were loathed by their Persian subjects, crushed beneath the yoke of heavy taxation. Knowing he could never mobilise a popular jihad, the shah depended on an unreliable cocktail of mercenaries.

In 1219, Genghis finally descended upon Khwarezmia with an army of up to 250,000 warriors. Although the shah commanded twice as many men, unwilling to risk a pitched battle he divided his forces up and garrisoned them in his cities. While his son, Jalal Al Din, protested this strategy, the shah was convinced his cities could outlast the Mongol invaders. But he failed to take into account that the nomadic Mongols were perfectly suited for long, distant sieges, even bringing their own livestock with them. Their soldiers were highly disciplined, their strategies meticulous and armies well organised. They also brought Chinese siege engineers with them to destroy forts with gunpowder or mining. Turkic collaborators, meanwhile, such as the Uyghurs and Qara Khitai, were intimately familiar with the inner workings of the empire.

Genghis split his army into three wings: one led by his sons Chagatai and Ögedei, another by his son Jochi, and one led by himself and his youngest son, Tolui. Bordered by the 800km Syr Darya River to the east, the Amu Darya River to the west, and the Kyzylkum Desert in between, the shah knew the enemy's options were limited. He naturally assumed they would focus their attention primarily on the eastern region of Transoxiana. Fittingly, Chagatai

Shah Muhammad II (honoured on this gold dinar coin) dreamed of placing the entire Islamic world beneath his yoke

Image: Classical Numismatic Group, Inc. CC BY-SA 2.5



NOVGOROD
Russian Principalities
Volga Bulgaria
KIEV
1223
BOLGHAI
Kipchaks
1222
SOLDAIA (SUDAK)
Georgia
TBILISI
DELUN BOLDOG
Kyrgyz Merkits
Tatars
Jin Dynasty
KARAKORUM
1218
1211, 1215
Naimans
Keraits
1211, 1218
1225
1209
BEIJING
Korea
1207
1226-27
1213
URGENCH
OTRAR
Qara-Khitan Khanate
Khwarezmian Empire
1221
Western Xia Dynasty
TABRIZ
BUKHARA
SAMARKAND
KASHGAR
DUNHUANG
NINGXIA
KAIFENG
TOUS
BAGHDAD
MERV
YARKAND
HOTAN
HANGZOU
RAY
NISHAPUR
Southern Song Dynasty
HERAT
Tibet
SHIRAZ
GHAZNI
GUANGZHOU
Key
Original area of control
Empire in 1207 and 1227
Empires in Asia at the beginning of the 13th century
Movements of Genghis Khan and his generals
Limits of the empire
0
1,000km

and Ögedei arrived at Utrar first, the site of the Mongol humiliation, and rained down stones until their catapults collapsed. Though the city put up a fierce fight, when it fell Chagatai and Ögedei seized the offending governor and killed him by pouring molten gold down his throat.

As the shah reeled from the attack, a second Mongol army under Jochi marched over the treacherous Tian Shan mountain range at lighting speed, capturing settlements along the Syr Darya River, before arriving at the city of Khojend. Simultaneously, Genghis performed a masterstroke, using local guides to navigate the oases of the supposedly unpassable Kyzylkum Desert before suddenly appearing behind the shah's lines at the gates of Bukhara – the richest and busiest city of Transoxiana.

At Bukhara, the Turkish garrison tried to break out but was defeated, and the city fell soon after. As buildings burned all around, spewing thick smoke into the air, Genghis stormed into the pulpit of the main mosque and delivered a sermon, declaring himself the "Flail of God" sent to punish them for their sins. Though the Mongols spared the populace, artisans, skilled workers and those with technical knowledge were drafted into the army or sent to Mongolia. Citizens with no skills were forced into slave labour to dig moats, move siege engines and battering rams, or even placed at the head of the army to serve as human shields. Advisors defected to the Mongol ranks, and Genghis began sending messengers out with false orders, forging letters claiming that scores of soldiers were abandoning the shah due to his ill treatment of his mother. He even wrote to the shah's mother, offering her the throne if she betrayed her son. The resultant chaos drove many to simply lay down their arms and flee.

Leaving a garrison of 60,000 men in the capital, even the shah fled west, hoping to raise troops in Persian Iraq. Once again, his own son Jalal refuted his cowardice and the signal he was sending his abandoned people.

THE LAST OF THE KHWAREZMIANS

In Jalal Al Din, Genghis Khan found a worthy foe

When the shah disappeared, his son, Jalal, adopted the Turkish title of sultan rather than the Persian shah. However, his preference for meritocracy over nepotism earned him few friends. After escaping a plot on his life at Gurganj, he linked up with two generals, leading 90,000 men to the Panjshir Valley, where he defeated a Mongol detachment. Furious, Genghis sent 30,000 men to wipe out the enemy, only to be decisively defeated at the Battle of Pavan. Jalal lost half his men soon after when one of his generals left in a fit of pique.

Desperate to keep up appearances, Genghis chased Jalal 595km to the Indus River. Despite being outnumbered, the sultan repeatedly charged at the enemy before finally hurtling across the river on his horse. Stunned, Genghis boomed, "Such sons should a father have!" Having raised another army in India, Jalal returned to the anarchic Persia in 1224 before conquering Azerbaijan and invading Georgia numerous times, destroying all the churches in Tiflis. By 1228 he had restored much of his realm, which spanned Iran, Persian Iraq and Azerbaijan.

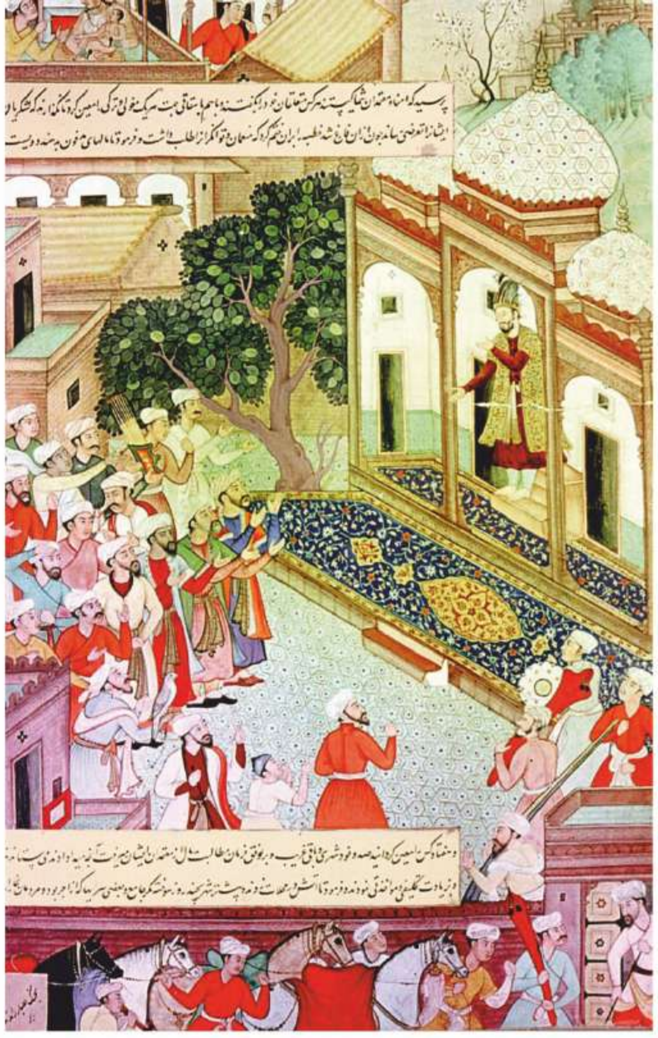
However, rather than consolidating his rule, Jalal continued his father's haughty hostility against rival Muslim powers, leading to a devastating joint Ayyubid and Seljuk invasion in 1230. At this critical moment the Mongols returned, chasing Jalal into the mountains of Diyarbakir, where he was unceremoniously killed by a bandit.

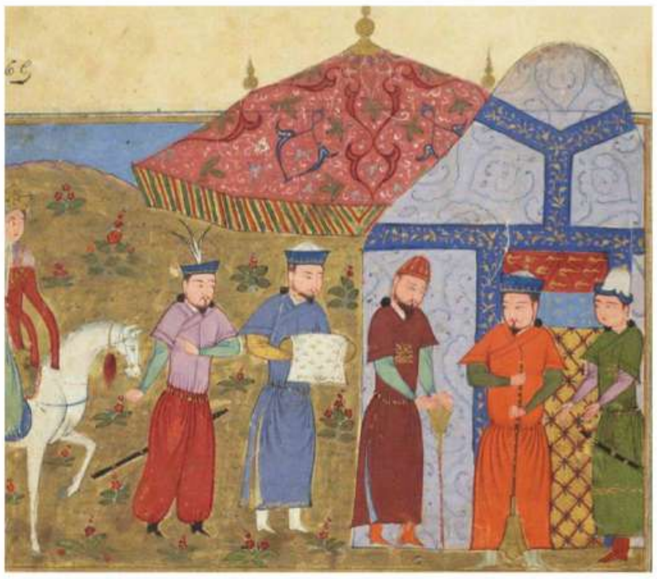
The indefatigable Jalal remains popular in Central Asia, adorning the Uzbekistani 25 so'm coin

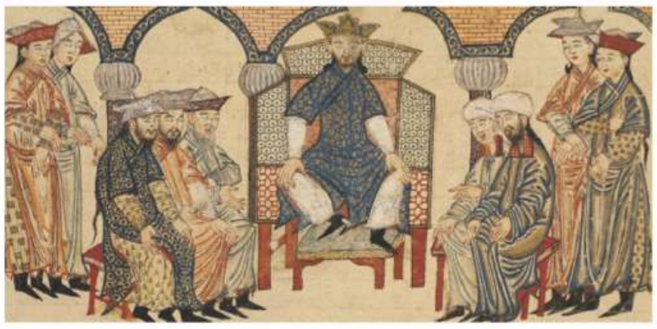
УЗБЕКИСТОН
РЕСПУБЛИ
JALOLIDDIN MANGUBERDI - 800 yil
25
SO'M

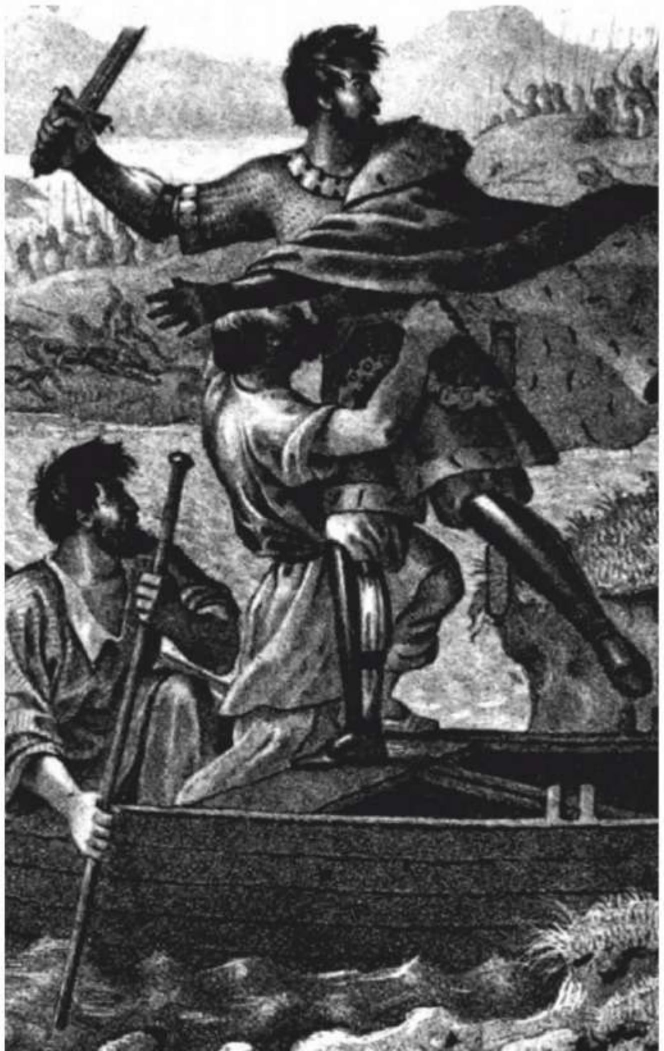
Strategically constructed on a hilltop, the ancient ruins of Khwarazm dominate the surrounding oasis

Images: Getty









Images: Alamy

Although Samarkand's leading religious figure negotiated a surrender – securing safe passage for 50,000 scholars and nobles – when a core of hardened soldiers hunkered down in the inner citadel, the Mongols decided to make an example of the city. After just ten days the city was torn down and the garrison massacred, followed by hundreds of thousands of civilians.

While Genghis continued his campaign, two captains, Jebe and Subutai, chased the shah all the way to an island off the Caspian Sea, where he supposedly died of hunger. Having broken the Khwarezmian army, Genghis escalated his conquest dramatically, unleashing a violent campaign of psychological warfare on the region of Khorasan – the resource-rich homeland of the shahs spanning Iran, Afghanistan and Turkmenistan, south of the Aral Sea. With no stones to quarry, the Mongols cut down whole mulberry groves, hardened their trunks in water and fashioned them into projectiles and battering rams.

Genghis placed his sons Jochi, Chagatai and Ögedei in charge of the siege of Gurganj, but when the three began to quarrel he gave sole command to Ögedei. Due to the infighting the siege lasted more than half a year. When Gurganj finally fell the Mongols destroyed its dam, flooding the town and diverting the Amu Darya from its course for centuries. As they trawled through the city the Mongols shipped off its artisans, enslaved its women and children and massacred everyone else, assigning each soldier 24 victims to slaughter. The khan hoped this carnage would terrify neighbouring towns into surrendering. As throngs of refugees fled the Mongol hordes, it did not take long for news, and the storm of Mongol hellfire, to spread.

Chroniclers wrote how, amid the slaughter in Tirmidh, a desperate woman told the attackers she had swallowed a pearl and the Mongols simply tore her belly open before proceeding to disembowel all corpses for treasure. At Balkh, the khan's son Tolui attacked the city using 3,000 machines firing heavy incendiary arrows, 300 catapults, 700 mangonels hurling naptha-filled pots, 4,000 ladders and 2,500 sacks of earth to fill in moats. Though he spared Balkh itself, when he took Merv in February 1221, despite promising clemency he was said to have massacred 700,000 people.

During these bloodbaths the inhabitants were led outside the city walls, where each Mongol soldier, wielding a battle axe, was assigned a number of people to slaughter, taking an ear from each back to their officers for counting. They would return days after each massacre to scour the city, dragging out any remaining wretches from their hiding places and butchering them.

***Left, top to bottom:** After conquering the city of Bukhara, Genghis Khan delivered a sermon at the mosque declaring himself the "Flail of God"*

A Khwarezmian embassy visited the Mongols after the fall of Beijing and was shocked at the levels of brutality

The death of the Seljuk sultan, Toghrul III, left a power vacuum in the Islamic world, setting the Abbasids, Khwarezmians and Mongols on a collision course

Jalal was not the only prince to evade the Mongols. Prince Mstislav of the Kievan Rus' was the only one of nine princes to escape the Mongols at the Battle of the Kalka River in May 1223

Yet despite his capacity for cruelty, Genghis had a deep respect for learning. In the city of Khwarazm, where 50,000 troops were said to have been assigned 24 victims each, the Khan offered safe passage to the Sufi master, Najm Al Din Kubra. Kubra declined, courageously accepting his fate.

> **"50,000 TROOPS WERE SAID TO HAVE BEEN ASSIGNED 24 VICTIMS EACH"**

Tolui had a particularly brutal point to prove at Nishapur, where the khan's son-in-law had previously been killed by an arrow fired from the city walls. Genghis' daughter supervised the subsequent bloodbath in which every living creature in the city was murdered, even its cats and dogs. The heads were piled into pyramids, separated into men, women and children. Having received the message loud and clear, the neighbouring city of Herat surrendered and was spared.

However, in Afghanistan and the Hindu Kush, the shah's son, Jalal, was doubling down, raising an army of Afghan and Pashtun tribesmen. At Bamiyan, the resistance dealt the Mongols a serious blow, killing Genghis' favourite grandson, a crime for which the city's entire population was later massacred. A brilliant general, Jalal scored a spectacular victory over 30,000 Mongols at the Battle of Parwan, Afghanistan, before being chased down and crushed by Genghis himself. In the khan's absence, Jalal's brief victory inspired a series of ill-conceived uprisings across several Mongol-held cities. In Herat, a group of guerrilla fighters supposedly survived on sugar raided from Chinese caravans before resorting to cannibalism. Having broken the resistance, the Mongols took their time putting down these revolts, spending weeks butchering their victims and levelling entire cities until the land reeked of death.

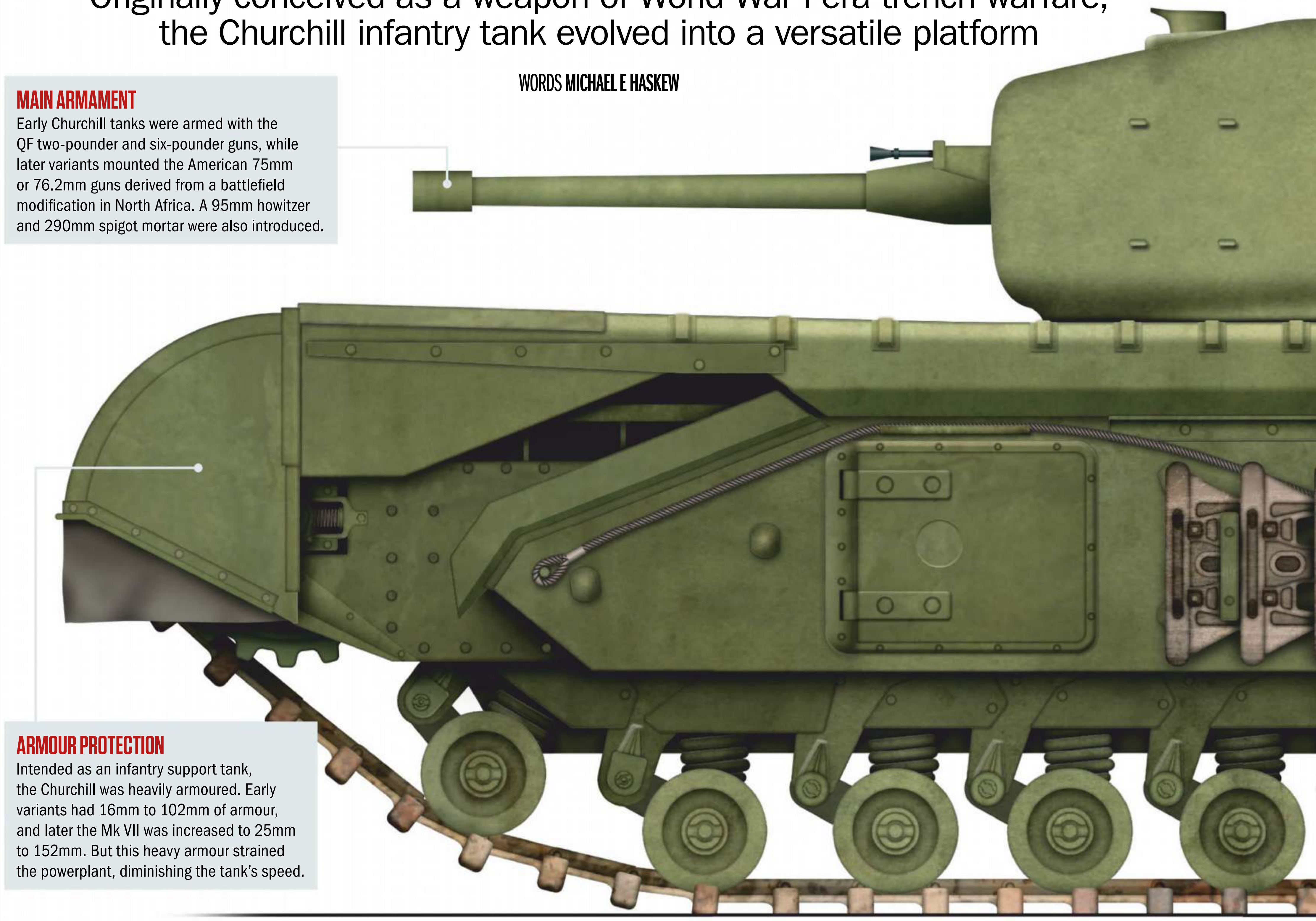
Chronicles tell of millions being killed in Herat and Nishapur, and though these numbers are certainly exaggerated, they attest to a level of destruction and suffering on a scale never experienced before. With the collapse of Persia's underground irrigation systems, whole regions were driven back to the desert.

Having inflicted a deep wound on the region and, content he had sufficiently broken Khwarezmia, Genghis was keen to return to China and Mongolia. After a brutal blitzkrieg campaign, he enjoyed some downtime in the Hindu Kush, summoning a Chinese sage in May 1222 to discuss the Philosopher's Stone and immortality. That autumn he studied Islam at Bukhara, enjoying much of what he heard, though the Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca contradicted his belief that the whole world was the 'House of God'. In the winter, he had the imams of Samarkand pray for him instead of the Khwarezmian prince and exempted the imams and judges from taxation, establishing a tradition of religious tolerance. The next spring he set off across the River Jaxartes, spending two years hunting on the steppes of western Turkestan, before finally leaving for Mongolia in the spring of 1225.

CHURCHILL

Originally conceived as a weapon of World War I-era trench warfare, the Churchill infantry tank evolved into a versatile platform

WORDS **MICHAEL E HASKEW**



MAIN ARMAMENT
Early Churchill tanks were armed with the QF two-pounder and six-pounder guns, while later variants mounted the American 75mm or 76.2mm guns derived from a battlefield modification in North Africa. A 95mm howitzer and 290mm spigot mortar were also introduced.

ARMOUR PROTECTION
Intended as an infantry support tank, the Churchill was heavily armoured. Early variants had 16mm to 102mm of armour, and later the Mk VII was increased to 25mm to 152mm. But this heavy armour strained the powerplant, diminishing the tank's speed.

Perhaps the most versatile and hence successful Allied tank of World War II, the Churchill was conceived in the late-1930s as an instrument of trench warfare as prosecuted during the Great War a generation earlier. A potential replacement for the Matilda II and Valentine series, the Churchill was designated an infantry tank: it was heavy and slow to keep pace with advancing foot soldiers while destroying enemy strongpoints as it traversed ditches, shell craters and uneven terrain that had been characteristic of the Western Front from 1914-18.

Following the rapid Nazi conquest of France and the Low Countries in the spring of 1940, it became apparent that static trench warfare was a thing of the past. Along with the urgent need for armoured vehicles to protect Britain in the event of an invasion, the Churchill was modified from a prototype dubbed the A-20 and built by Belfast shipbuilders Harland and Wolff. The subsequent A-22 was manufactured initially by Vauxhall Motors to specifications developed under Dr HE Merritt, director of Woolwich Arsenal Tank Design. During the course of World War II, nearly 7,400 Churchill tanks were produced, including 13 Marks, or variants, of the most common Mk IV and specialised vehicles configured to perform a myriad of functions.

TANK

CHURCHILL TANK

COMMISSIONED:	1941
ORIGIN:	GREAT BRITAIN
LENGTH:	7.65 METRES (25.1FT)
RANGE:	ROAD: 195KM (121MI) CROSS-COUNTRY: 100KM (62MI)
ENGINE:	1 X BEDFORD TWIN-SIX HORIZONTALLY OPPOSED 12-CYLINDER PETROL ENGINE GENERATING 350 BRITISH HORSEPOWER
CREW:	5
ARMOUR:	16MM TO 152MM
PRIMARY WEAPON:	QF TWO-PDR (40MM); QF SIX-PDR (57MM); 75MM, 76.2MM, 95MM HOWITZER; 290MM SPIGOT MORTAR
SECONDARY WEAPON:	1-3 X BESA 7.92MM MACHINE GUNS DEPENDING ON VARIANT

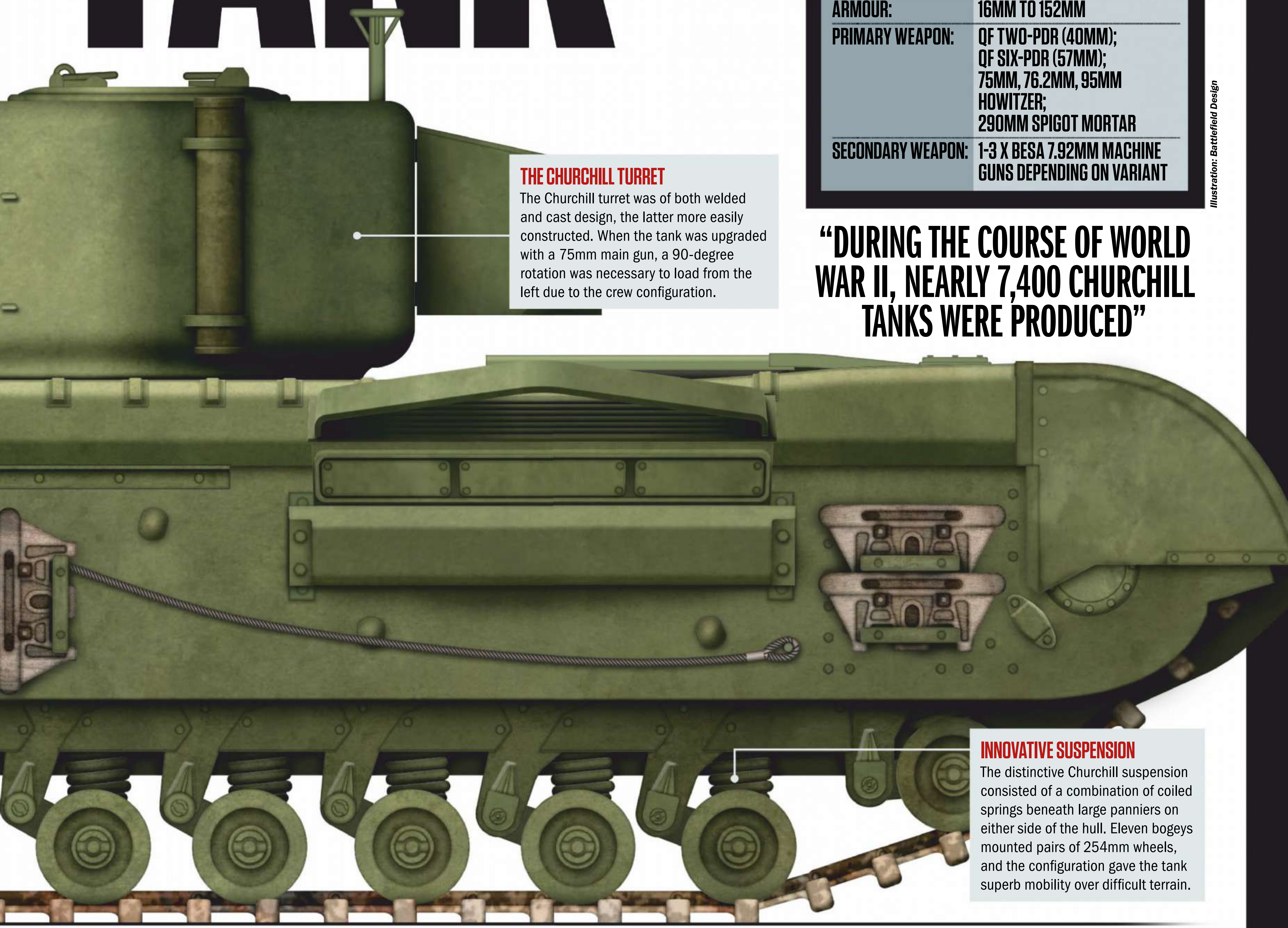


Illustration: Battlefield Design

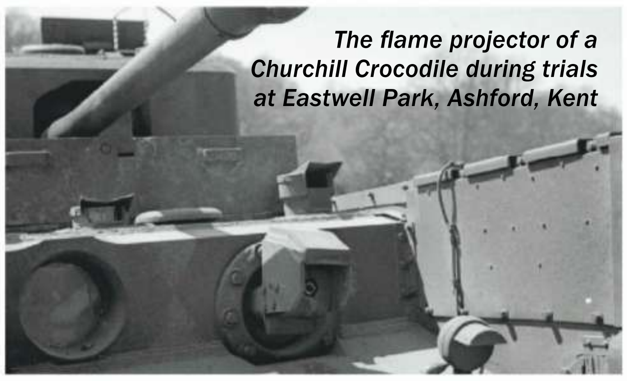
THE CHURCHILL TURRET

The Churchill turret was of both welded and cast design, the latter more easily constructed. When the tank was upgraded with a 75mm main gun, a 90-degree rotation was necessary to load from the left due to the crew configuration.

> "DURING THE COURSE OF WORLD WAR II, NEARLY 7,400 CHURCHILL TANKS WERE PRODUCED"

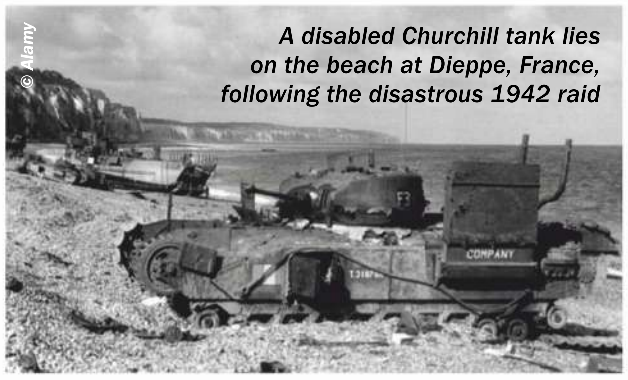
INNOVATIVE SUSPENSION

The distinctive Churchill suspension consisted of a combination of coiled springs beneath large panniers on either side of the hull. Eleven bogeys mounted pairs of 254mm wheels, and the configuration gave the tank superb mobility over difficult terrain.



The flame projector of a Churchill Crocodile during trials at Eastwell Park, Ashford, Kent

Image: Wiki / PD / Gov



A disabled Churchill tank lies on the beach at Dieppe, France, following the disastrous 1942 raid

© Alamy

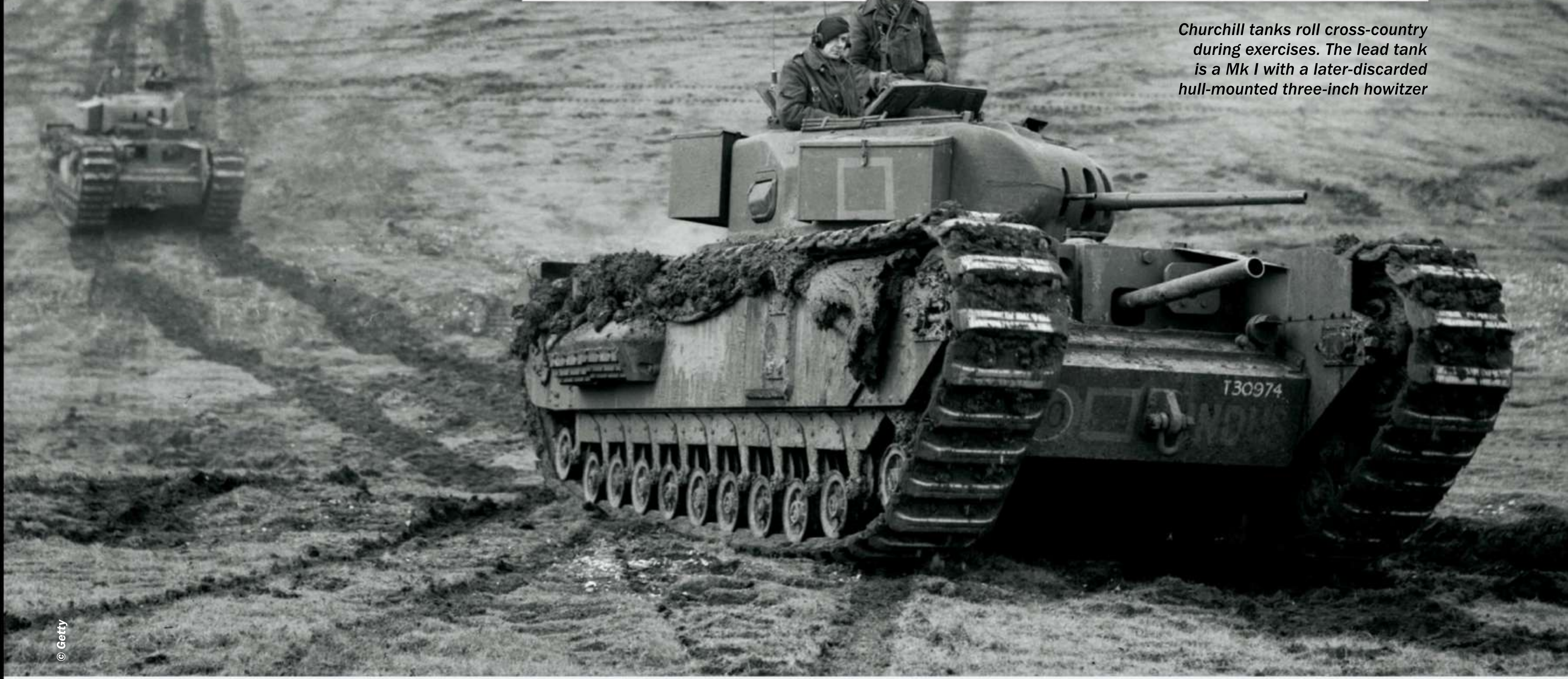
The tank performed well in Normandy and North Africa

Image: Wiki / PD / Gov

> **"WHILE THE TWO-POUNDER WAS ADEQUATE IN 1940, LATER THE SIX-POUNDER WAS INTRODUCED IN A MODIFIED TURRET TO COUNTER INCREASING GERMAN FIREPOWER"**

A Churchill tank lumbers into action at the Senio River during the arduous Allied campaign in Italy

© Alamy

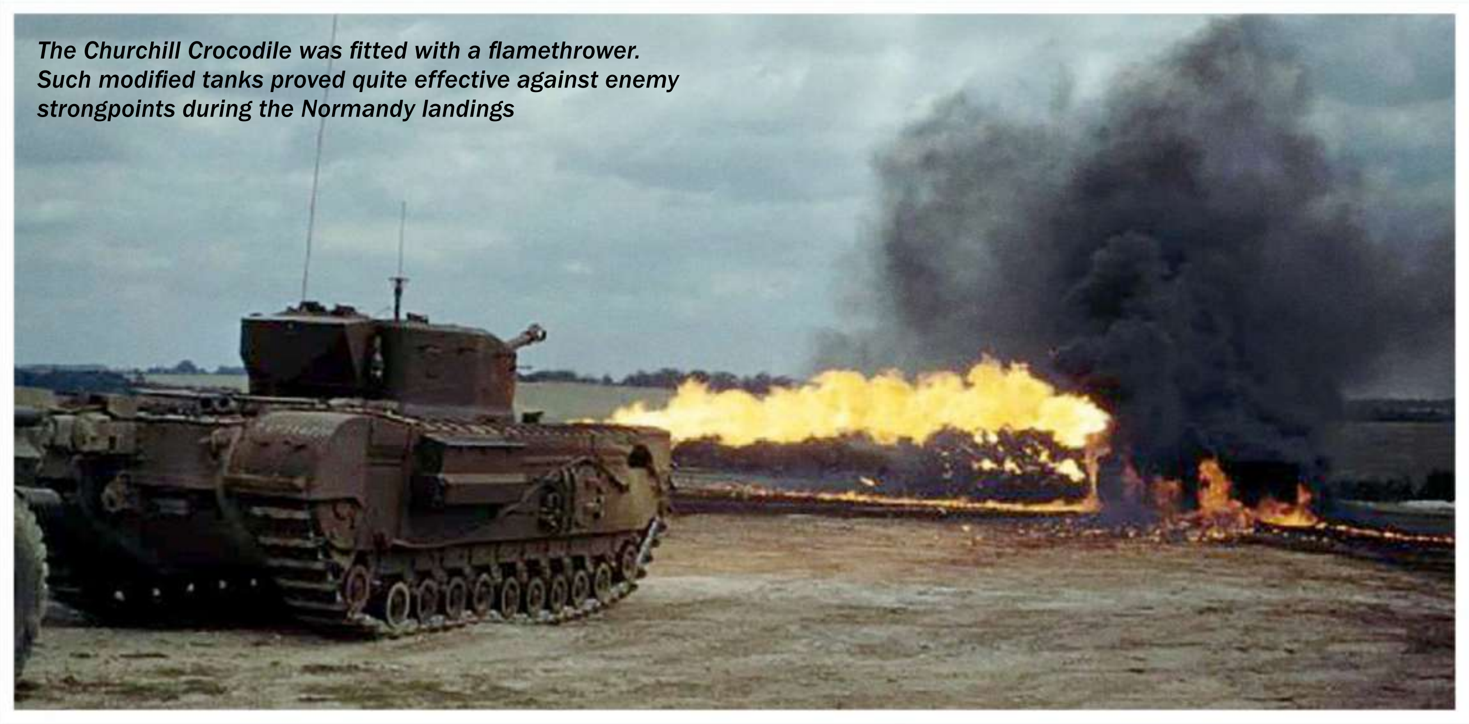


Churchill tanks roll cross-country during exercises. The lead tank is a Mk I with a later-discarded hull-mounted three-inch howitzer

© Getty

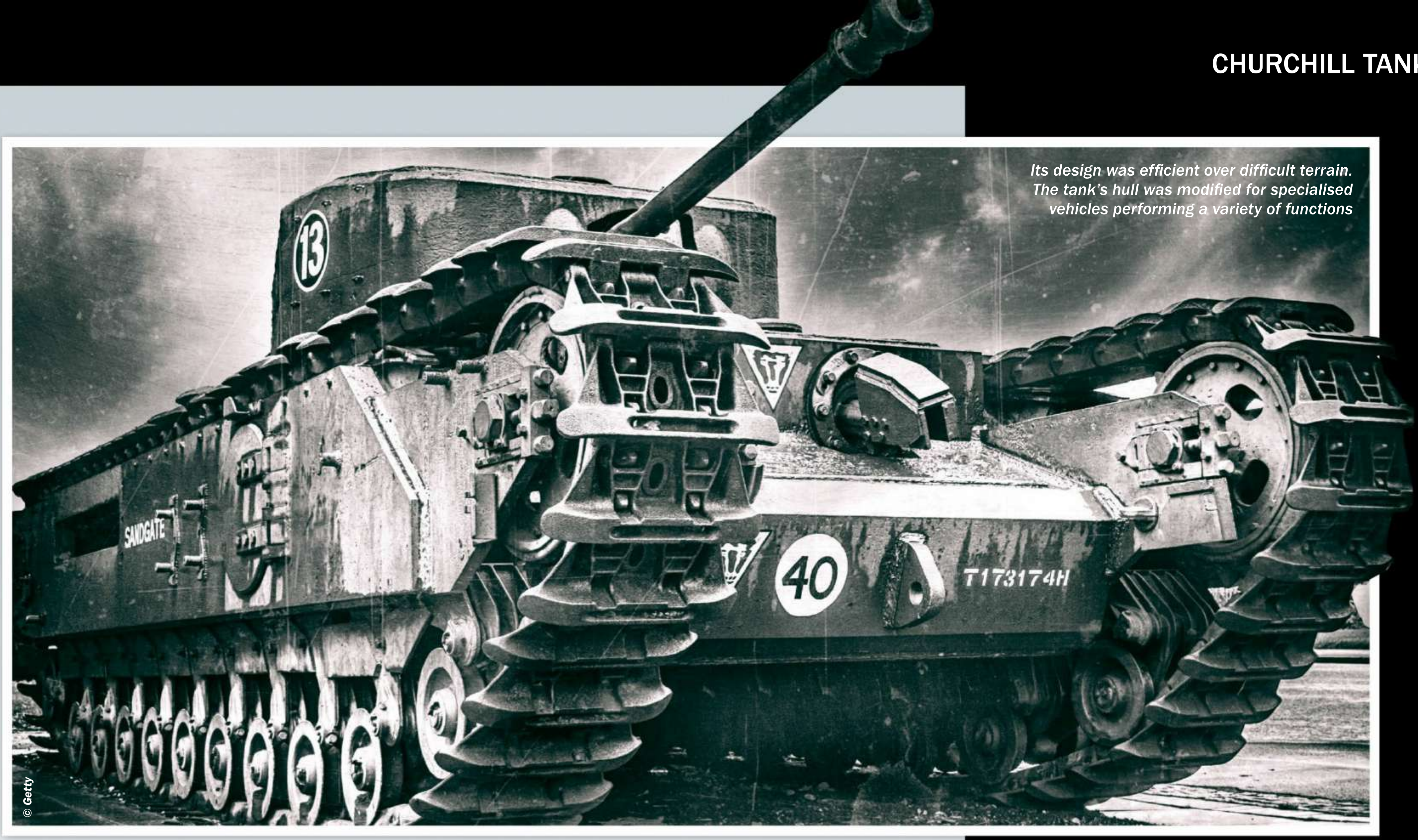
ARMAMENT

Although the Churchill was envisioned primarily as an infantry support tank, regular upgrades in primary armament enhanced its capability in a tank-versus-tank role. Early Churchill Marks were equipped with the QF two-pounder gun, later upgraded to the six-pounder. While the two-pounder was adequate in 1940, later the six-pounder was introduced in a modified turret to counter increasing German firepower. Later, the US 75mm and 76.2mm guns were utilised, while the Mk VII 'heavy Churchill' mounted the QF 75. Specialised Churchills were armed with a 290mm spigot mortar or flamethrower.



The Churchill Crocodile was fitted with a flamethrower. Such modified tanks proved quite effective against enemy strongpoints during the Normandy landings

Image: Wiki / PD / Gov

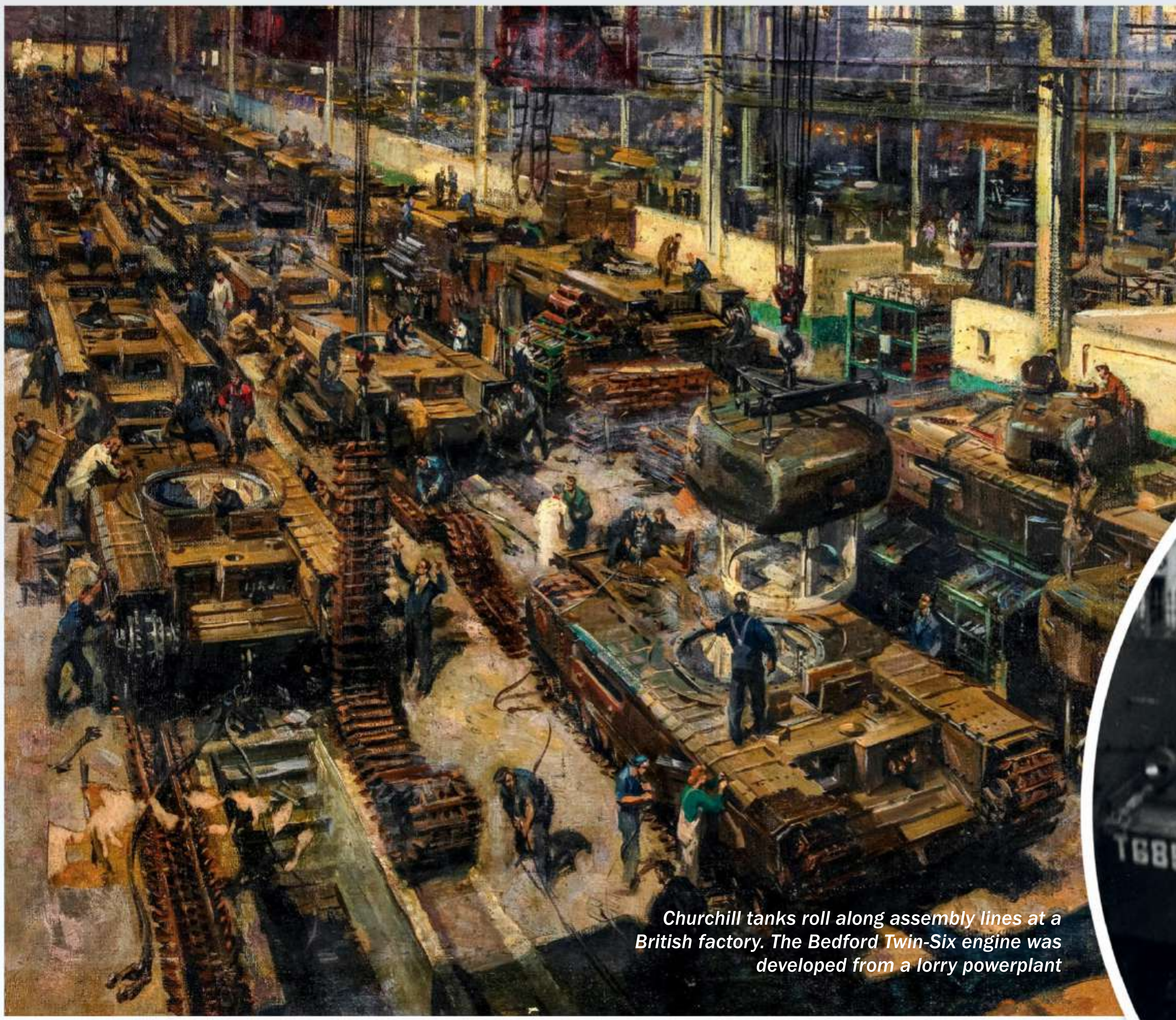


Its design was efficient over difficult terrain. The tank's hull was modified for specialised vehicles performing a variety of functions

© Getty

DESIGN

The box-like hull and turret design of the Churchill infantry tank, along with its unique suspension, made it easily recognised on the battlefield. The tank was heavy, with various Marks weighing more than 40 tons. However, the extensive armour was intended for survivability while engaging enemy strongpoints. The hull and later turret construction were highly adaptable, accommodating specialised variants such as the ARK (Armoured Ramp Carrier) bridging tank, ARV (Armoured Recovery Vehicle), Kangaroo personnel carrier, the flamethrower-equipped Crocodile, the AVRE (Armoured Vehicle Royal Engineers) mounting a 290mm spigot mortar, and more.



Churchill tanks roll along assembly lines at a British factory. The Bedford Twin-Six engine was developed from a lorry powerplant

© Alamy

ENGINE

The Bedford Twin-Six 12-cylinder horizontally opposed petrol engine of the Churchill tank generated 350 British horsepower and was often unreliable in the field. In fairness, though, it was used to drive one of the heaviest tanks of World War II. The engine was adapted from that of a pre-war lorry and remained with the Churchill throughout its service life. The added weight of modifications further strained the engine's performance, and tight access limited the crew's ability to perform maintenance in the field.

In the aftermath of the 1942 Dieppe Raid, German soldiers inspect the engine and crew compartment of an abandoned Churchill tank

© Alamy

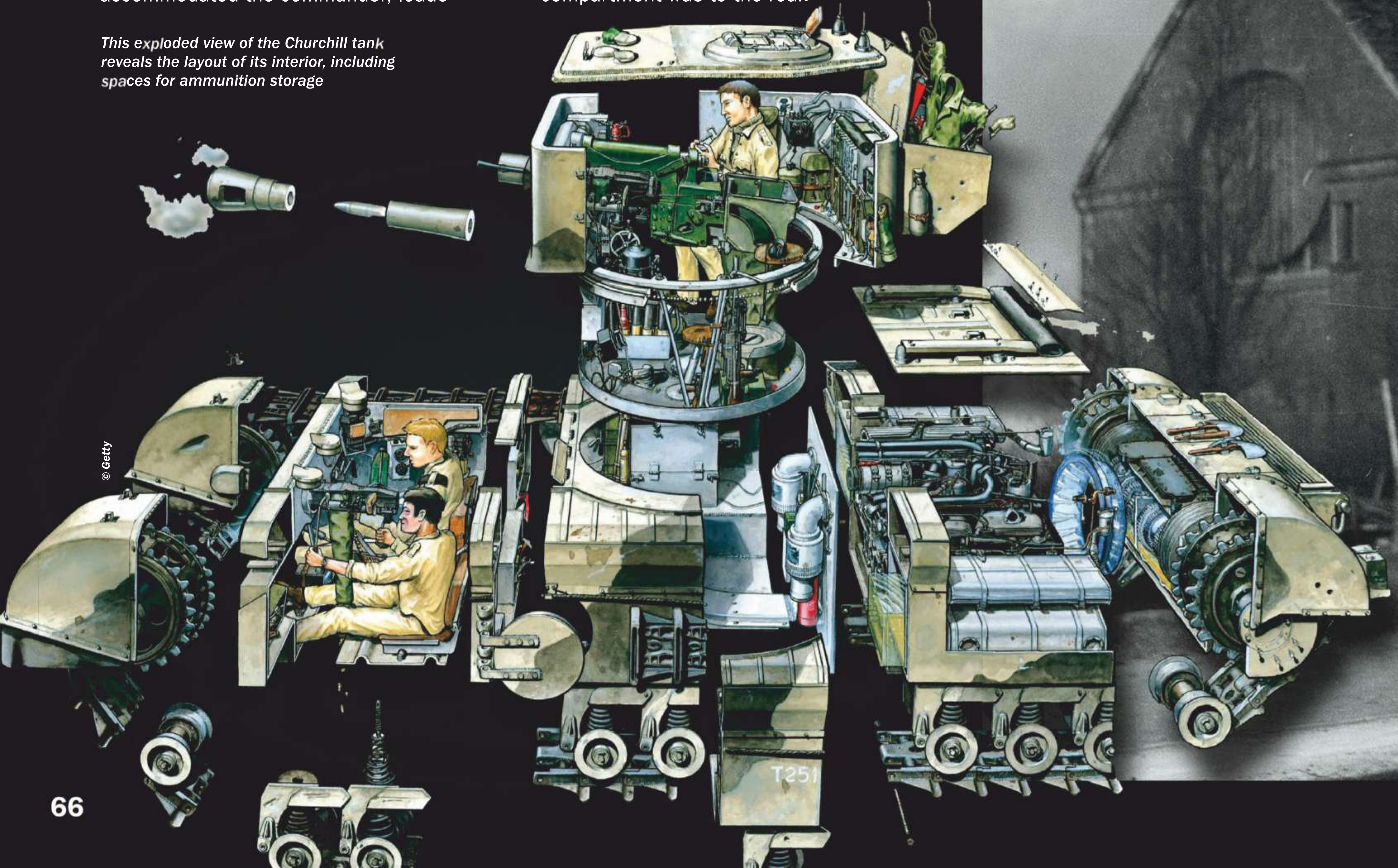
6
T68560R
BERT
175
B

British Prime Minister Winston Churchill watches a column of Churchill tanks pass in review during ceremonies in 1942

© Alamy

COCKPIT, CABIN AND CREW

Divided into four compartments, the Churchill tank's hull was narrow and relatively long in the style of British Army lorries. It was accessed via two side hatches. The fighting compartment and turret were centred and accommodated the commander, loade radio operator, and gunner. The driver sat forward adjacent to a co-driver/hull gunner and controlled the steering system with a tiller bar. The driver compartment was not completely separated from the fighting compartment, which provided additional space for ease of movement. The engine compartment was to the rear.



This exploded view of the Churchill tank reveals the layout of its interior, including spaces for ammunition storage

© Getty

© Alamy

SERVICE HISTORY

With the threat of invasion imminent in 1940, the Churchill tank was rushed into production and deployed without adequate field testing. In fact, a Vauxhall Motors insert with the tank's instruction manual admitted, "All those things which we know are not as they should be will be put right. Fighting vehicles are urgently required, and instructions have been received to proceed with the vehicle as it is rather than hold up production."

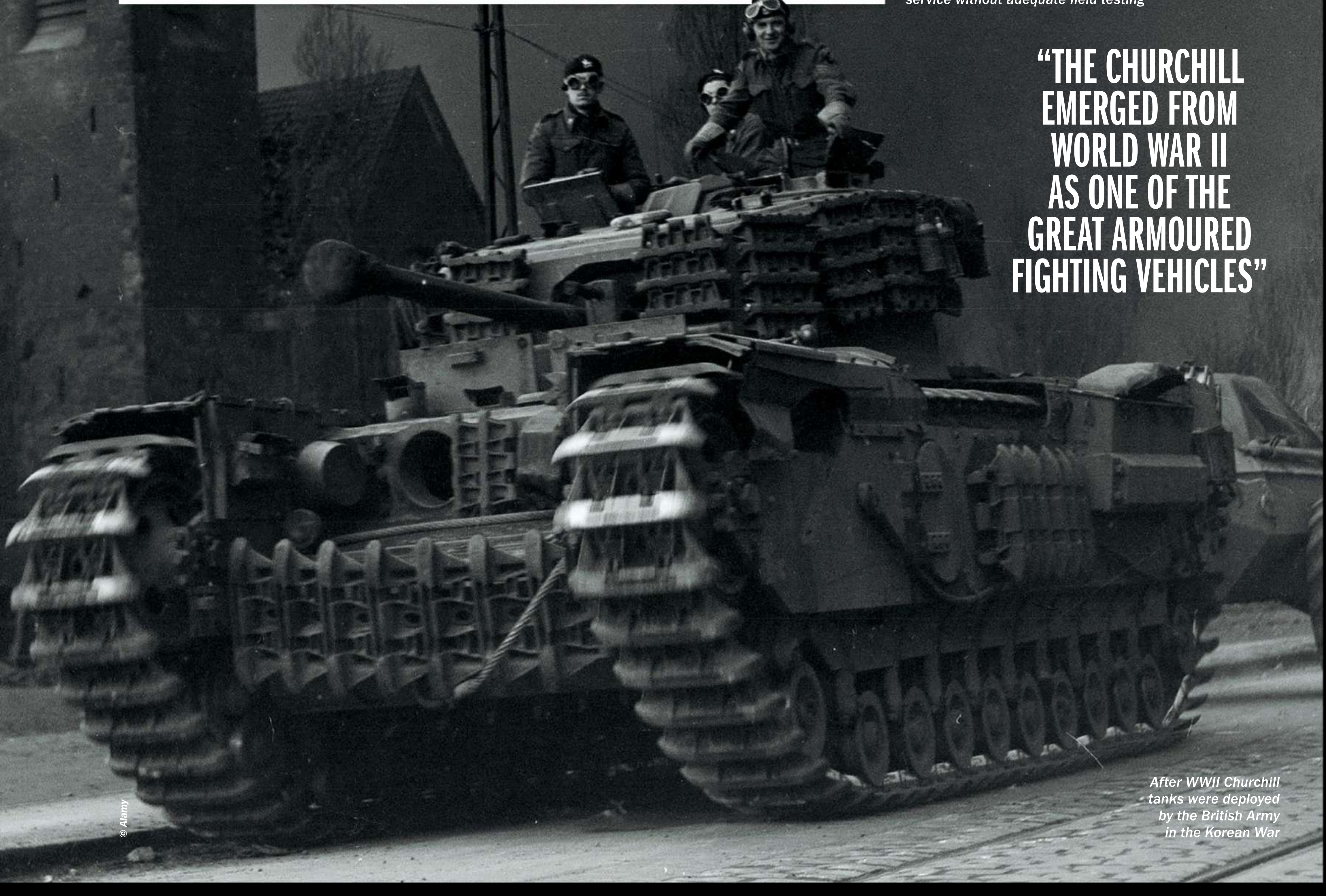
Despite early performance issues, the Churchill emerged from World War II as one of the great armoured fighting vehicles of the conflict. However, its combat debut during the abortive Dieppe Raid against the French port in August 1942 resulted in the loss of 30 Churchills of the Canadian Calgary Regiment.

The Churchill performed admirably in all theatres, including operations in North Africa and Normandy. Particularly noteworthy is the contribution of specialised Churchills, including flamethrower, mortar, bridging, anti-mine, and personnel variants in Western Europe during and after D-Day.

Deployed during the Korean War, the Churchill was withdrawn from British Army service in 1952. It remained active with other armed forces into the 1960s.

***Left:** The desperate need for tanks in 1940 meant the Churchill was rushed into service without adequate field testing*

"THE CHURCHILL EMERGED FROM WORLD WAR II AS ONE OF THE GREAT ARMOURED FIGHTING VEHICLES"


© Alamy

After WWII Churchill tanks were deployed by the British Army in the Korean War

RELIVE THE ICONIC EVACUATION THAT CHANGED THE COURSE OF HISTORY

Take a fascinating look at one of World War II's most pivotal moments. Examine the events that led up to the evacuation at Dunkirk, the rescue operation itself, key players and the impact it had on the war.

NEW
HISTORY OF WAR
Book of
DUNKIRK
THE EVENT THAT SHAPED THE COURSE OF HISTORY
BOOKAZINE
Future
Plus: All-new first-hand account
THE EVACUATION • KEY PLAYERS • THE AFTERMATH
ISBN 978-1-78546-632-8-8
FIRST EDITION
£9.99

ON SALE NOW

FUTURE

Ordering is easy. Go online at:
www.myfavouritemagazines.co.uk
Or get it from selected supermarkets & newsagents

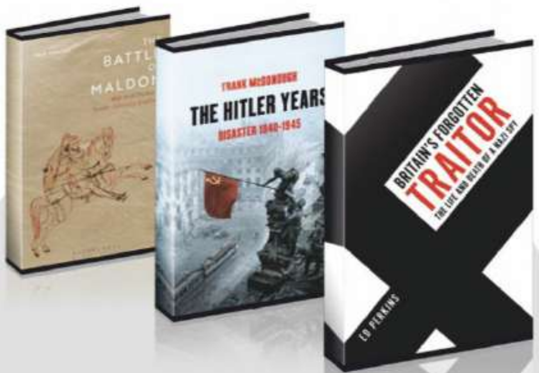
HOME FRONT

72 AMERICA'S DUXFORD LEGACY

The Air Museum has now been given a Grade II listed status by Historic England

70

WWII this month: February, 1941


BATTLE OF MALDON
FRANK McDONOUGH
THE HITLER YEARS
DISASTER 1940-1945
BRITAIN'S FORGOTTEN TRAITOR
THE LIFE AND DEATH OF A NAZI SPY
ED PERKINS

74

Our pick of the latest books and films

82

Artefact of War: a 15th-century tournament shield

www.historyanswers.co.uk

FACEBOOK /HistoryofWarMag

TWITTER @HistoryofWarMag

WWII THIS MONTH...

FEBRUARY 1941

To commemorate 80 years since the Second World War, **History of War** will be taking a look at some of the key events taking place during each month of the conflict

THE FEBRUARY STRIKE

After the invasion and occupation of the Netherlands by Nazi Germany in 1940, the Third Reich's anti-Semitic policies were soon enforced on the Dutch. At the time of the invasion, there were over 140,000 Jews living in the Netherlands, including many refugees from the Third Reich. After the invasion, Jews were barred from taking public office, while their businesses were targeted by both indigenous facist supporters and the occupying Germans. Soon, hundreds of Jews were being arrested on the streets and deported to the Buchenwald and Mauthausen camps in Germany – many were tortured and executed. On 25 February, thousands of Amsterdam workers joined a general strike in protest against the deportations of Jews. Known as the Februaristaking, or February Strike, scores of protesters were killed as the occupying German and collaborationist Dutch forces broke up the strike.

CAUDILLO AND IL DUCE

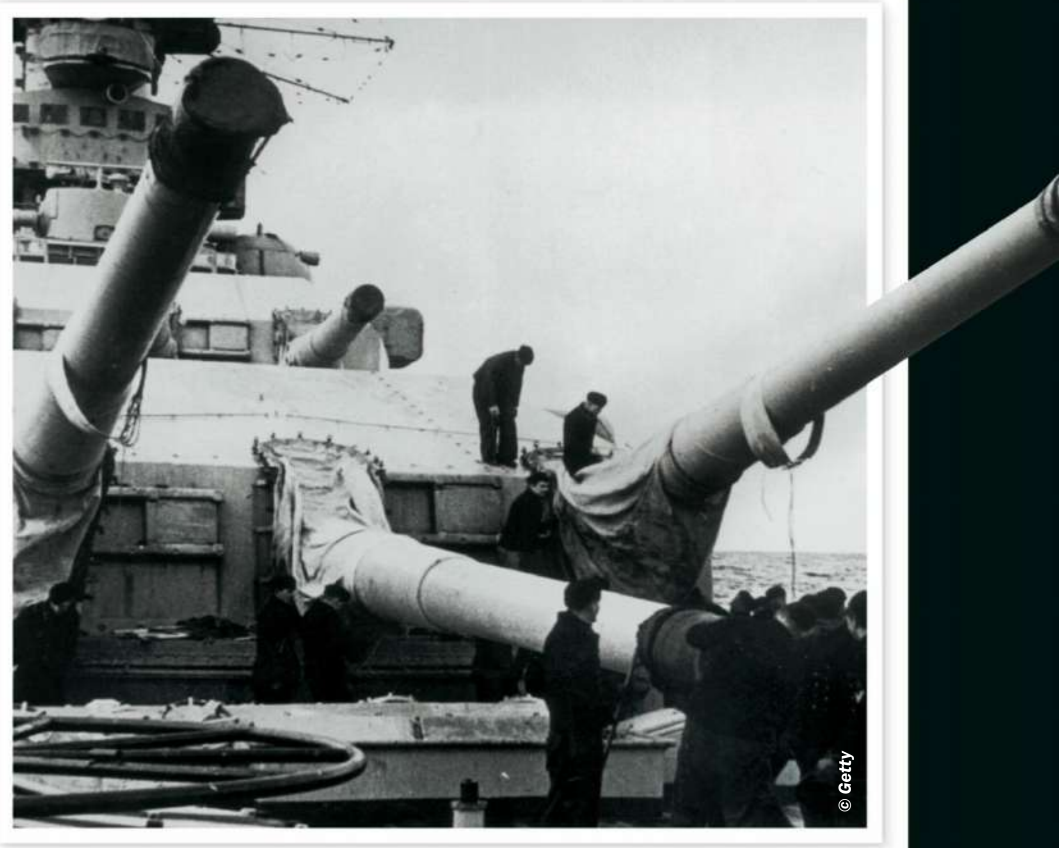
On 12 February, Spain's dictator Francisco Franco travelled across Vichy France into Italy to meet with Mussolini. Officially neutral in the war, Spain continued to be approached by the Axis powers to join in the fight against Britain and its allies. This was Franco's first trip abroad since his victory in Spain's civil war, and upon his return trip through Vichy France he stopped in Montpellier to meet with Marshal Pétain.

© Getty

© Alamy

SCHARNHORST ESCAPES TO THE ATLANTIC

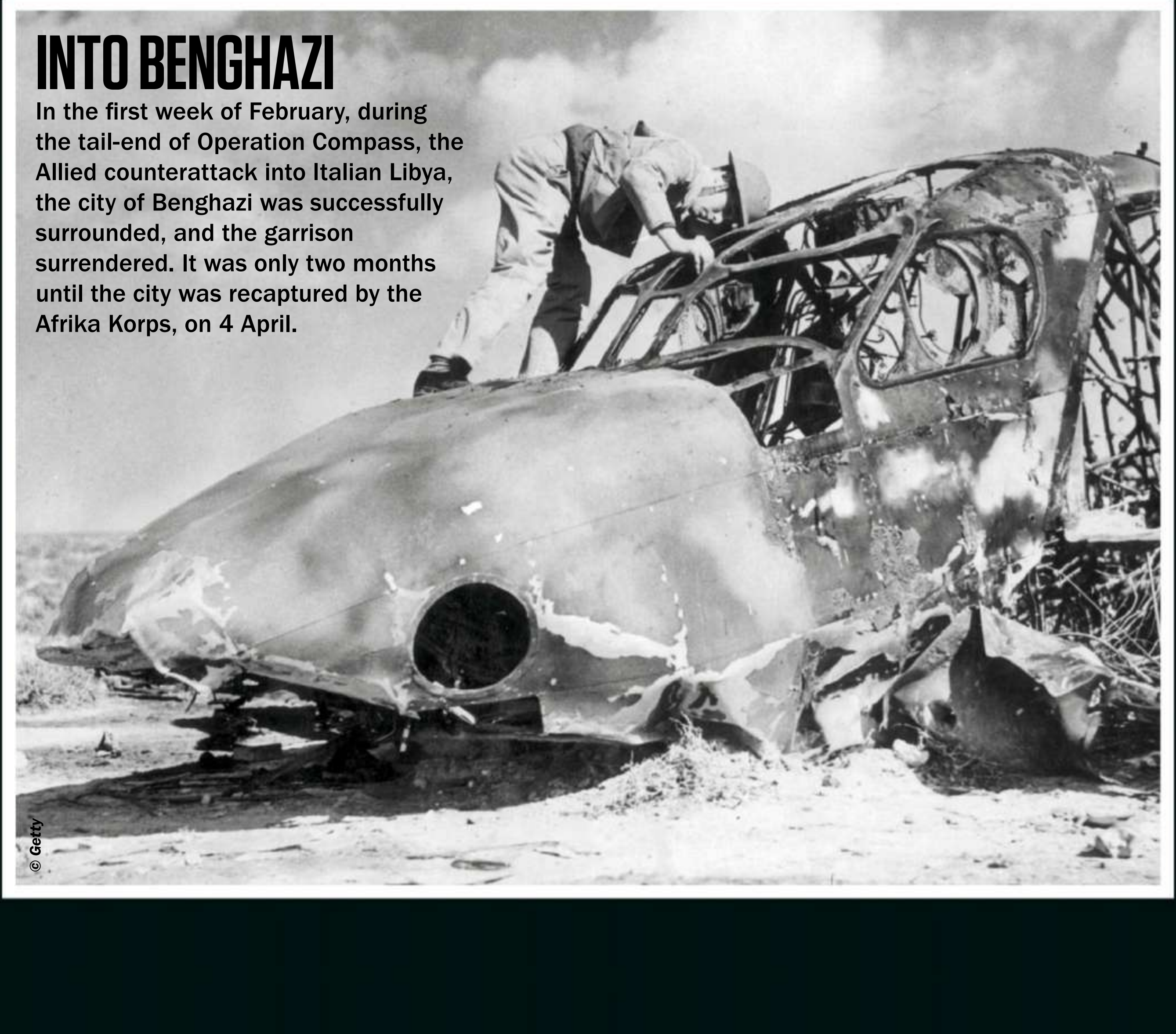
Successfully evading the Royal Navy, capital ships Scharnhorst and Gneisenau broke out into the open Atlantic Ocean in early February. Operation Berlin had begun on 22 January, when the two ships departed Kiel, Germany, with the aim of disrupting Allied shipping. The pair encountered convoy HX-106 on 8 February, but did not engage. Operation Berlin lasted until late-March 1941, during which the pair of ships claimed 113,600 tons of Allied shipping sunk.



© Getty

INTO BENGHAZI

In the first week of February, during the tail-end of Operation Compass, the Allied counterattack into Italian Libya, the city of Benghazi was successfully surrounded, and the garrison surrendered. It was only two months until the city was recaptured by the Afrika Korps, on 4 April.



© Getty

MUSEUMS & EVENTS

Discover a native Welsh prince's castle, Nantwich's rich military history and how an aviation museum has become one of the youngest listed buildings in England

Duxford's American heritage

The American Air Museum at IWM Duxford has been named a Grade II listed building by Historic England

Imperial War Museum Duxford in Cambridgeshire is the home of the American Air Museum (AAM). Purpose-built on the site during 1995-97, the AAM exhibits the IWM's collection of American military aircraft, which is widely regarded as the most impressive group outside the United States. It has now been declared as a Grade II listed building by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) on the advice of Historic England.

The AAM was designed by renowned architects Foster & Partners in collaboration with Ove Arup & Partners as consulting engineers. Although it's not yet 30 years old, the museum is considered an outstanding and innovative architectural site and won critical acclaim in 1998 when it was awarded the Royal Institute of British Architects Stirling Prize.

The chief architect for the building was the internationally acclaimed Norman Foster, who highlighted his passion for flight in the design. The curved concrete roof was inspired by the stressed skin structure often seen in aircraft construction, and its ring-shaped geometry resembles the cockpit of a modern fighter jet. The building's resemblance to a WWII blister hangar also adds to Foster's flying symbolism.

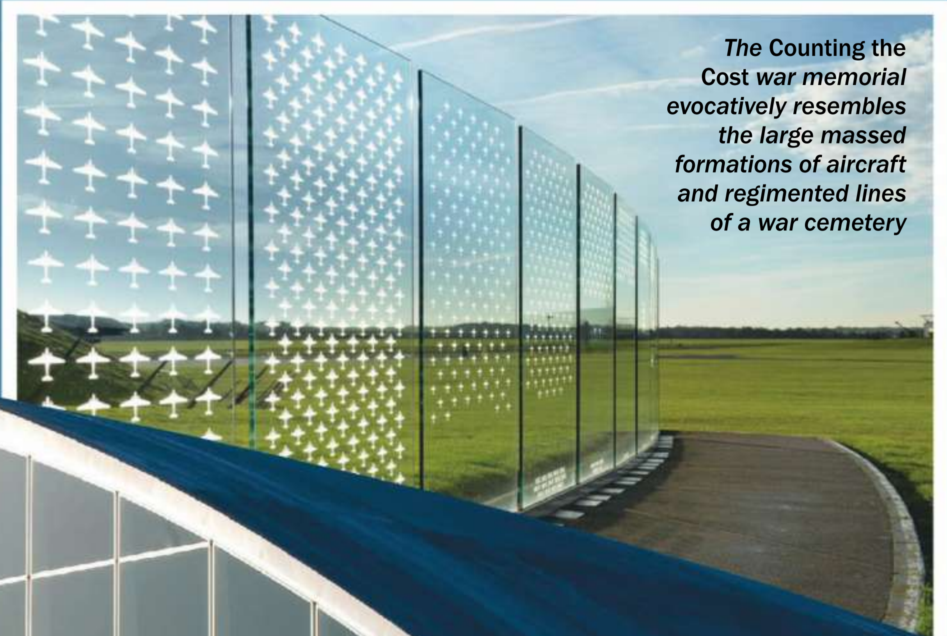
The AAM's home at IWM Duxford is pertinent because it's a former RAF and USAAF station, with many of its original historic structures already designated as listed buildings. The museum's displays not only acknowledge the emergence of US air power during the 20th century but also pay tribute to the 30,000 airmen who lost their lives flying out of British bases during WWII. Renato Niemis' evocative memorial sculpture *Counting the Cost* is made up of 52 large glass panels engraved with cross-like silhouettes of the 7,031 American aircraft that were lost on operations. Its inclusion in the museum entrance is part of the reason why the AAM was awarded a Grade II listing.

Duncan Wilson, Chief Executive of Historic England says, "The American Air Museum is an outstanding building, with a geometric construction that makes it the most complicated of all Foster's work. Its smooth, sweeping form is expertly designed to complement IWM's amazing aircraft collection. It is important to recognise and protect the work of architects like Foster who have helped to shape much of England's modern landscape and this site is special for the stories it tells about 20th century combat."

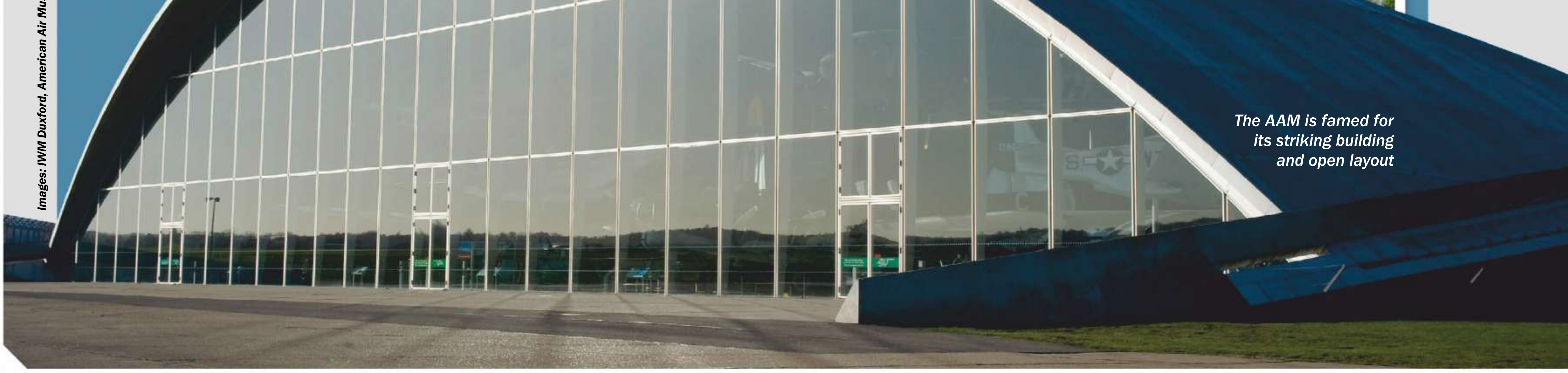
Heritage Minister Nigel Huddleston adds, "This listing demonstrates that the American Air Museum is both a stunning example of modern architecture and, alongside the *Counting the Cost* war memorial sculpture, an important memorial to those serving in WWII. I'm pleased that we are able to recognise the museum's architectural and historical significance and remember those who paid the ultimate sacrifice by protecting this site for future generations."

For more information visit www.americanairmuseum.com and www.historicengland.org.uk

The AAM at Duxford features various displays of static and hanging aircraft



The Counting the Cost *war memorial evocatively resembles the large massed formations of aircraft and regimented lines of a war cemetery*



The AAM is famed for its striking building and open layout

Images: IWM Duxford, American Air Museum

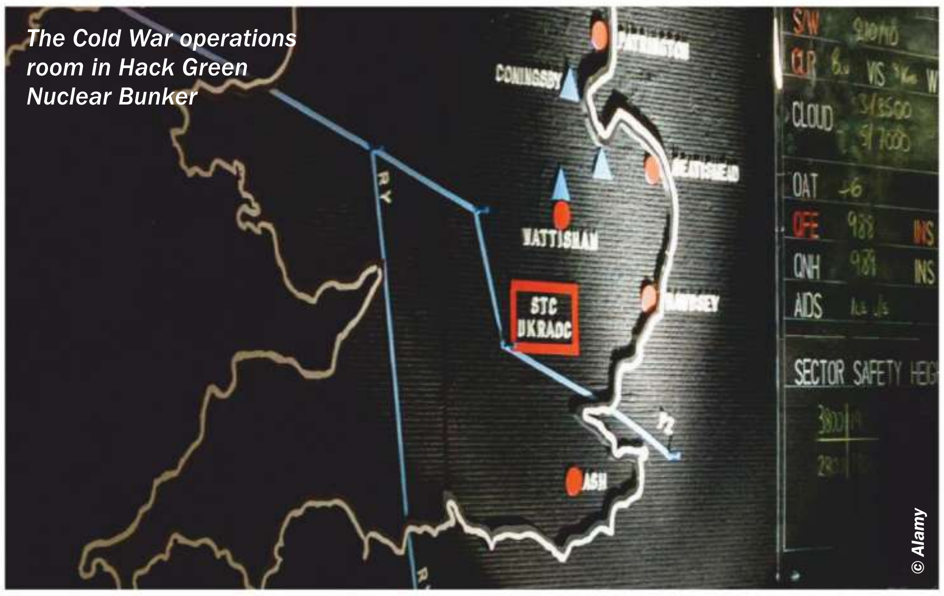
Nantwich at war

This sleepy Cheshire town has a military heritage than encompasses both Civil and Cold Wars

With a population of just over 17,000 Nantwich is a small market town that's best known for its extensive collection of historic buildings ranging from the medieval, Tudor and Georgian eras. It also has a surprisingly wide-ranging military history that's explored in the separate attractions of Nantwich Museum and Hack Green Nuclear Bunker.

Nantwich Museum focuses on the general history of the town but has a Civil War Centre that tells the story of its role during the British Civil Wars. A Parliamentarian stronghold, Nantwich was besieged by the Royalists several times before Sir Thomas Fairfax won a decisive battle there for Parliament in January 1644.

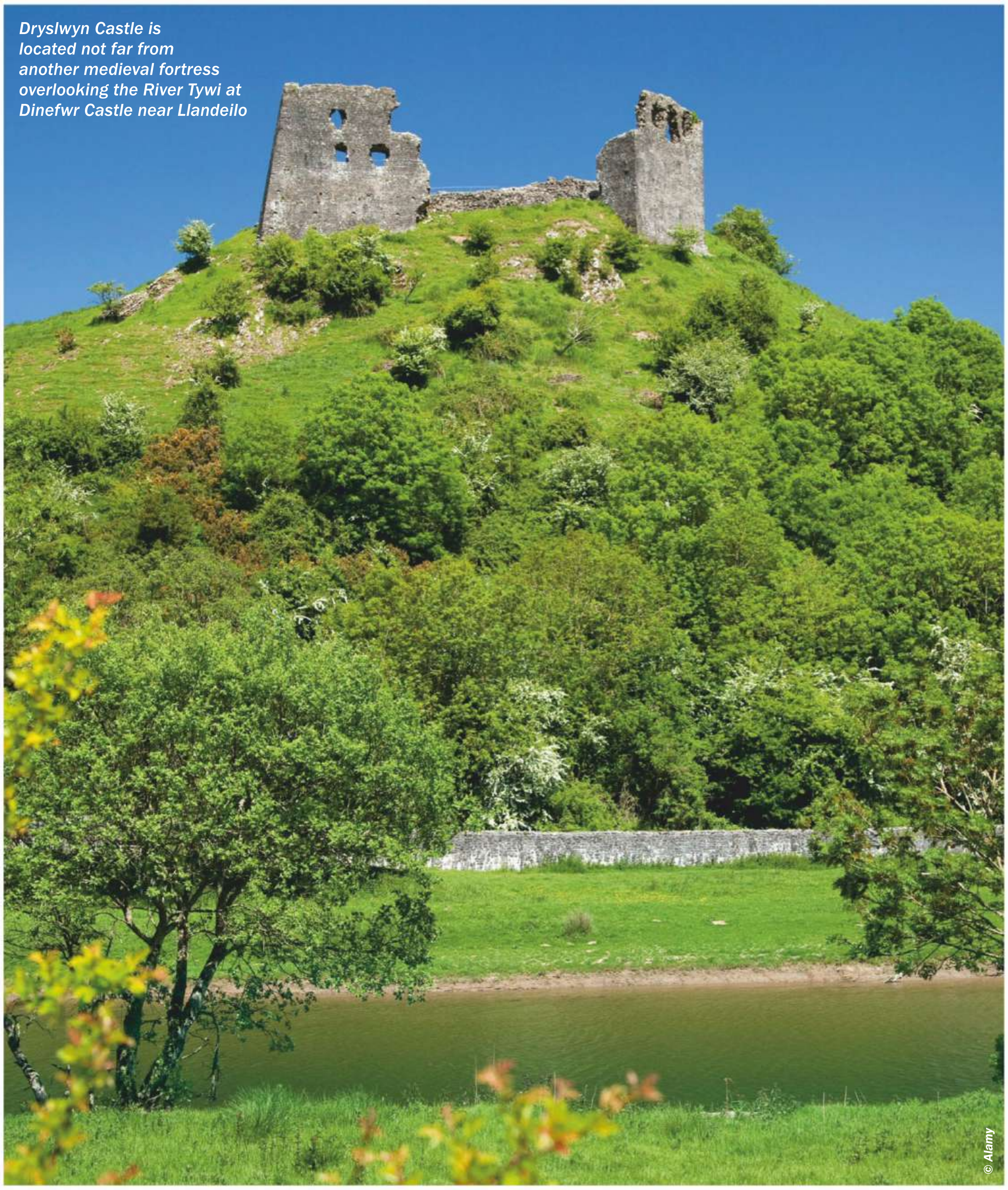
Meanwhile, Hack Green Nuclear Bunker reveals Nantwich's secret 20th century military history. Originally an RAF radar station during WWII, Hack Green's radar capabilities were expanded during the Cold War. Operating as a 'Rotor' station, this semi-sunk bunker provided long-range radar warnings of the approach of Russian bombers and was manned by hundreds of RAF personnel. Hack Green also provided air traffic control services for military and civilian aircraft before the station was closed in 1966.



The Cold War operations room in Hack Green Nuclear Bunker

© Alamy

For more information about Nantwich Museum visit www.nantwichmuseum.org.uk; for Hack Green Nuclear Bunker visit www.hackgreen.co.uk



Dryslwyn Castle is located not far from another medieval fortress overlooking the River Tywi at Dinefwr Castle near Llandeilo

© Alamy

Deheubarth's last stand

Dryslwyn Castle is a rare Grade I listed building that was built by an ancient Welsh prince

Located in Carmarthenshire between the towns of Carmarthen and Llandeilo, Dryslwyn Castle is considered to be one of the most important structures built by a Welsh chieftain in the Middle Ages. Constructed in the 1220s by the one of the ancient princes of Deheubarth, Dryslwyn sits on top of an isolated rocky hill above the River Tywi in the Tywi Valley. It was considered an important seat for the principality of Deheubarth and was the scene of a two-week siege between English and Welsh forces. The castle, which was loyal to Rhys ap Maredudd, was besieged in 1287 by 11,000 English troops, who captured it after bringing down a large section of the walls.

Dryslwyn was later seized in 1403 by Owain Glyndwr, the last native Prince of Wales, but it was largely demolished when English forces recaptured it. Today, its best preserved remains are located within the inner ward. This includes a round tower, curtain wall, chapel and great hall. The castle is run by Cadw, the Welsh government's historic environment service, and is free to visit daily all year round. Dryslwyn is accessible by road on the B4297 from the A40 and there is a public car park opposite the main entrance with 15 spaces.

For more information visit www.cadw.gov.wales

REVIEWS

Our pick of the latest military history books and films

PERSIAN LESSONS

A FINELY ACTED HOLOCAUST FILM THAT SUFFERS FROM ITS IMPLAUSIBLE STORYLINE

Director: Vadim Perelman **Cast:** Nahuel Pérez Biscayart, Lars Eidinger, Jonas Nay **Released:** 29 January 2021

Imagine that you're a prisoner being transported to a Nazi concentration camp in 1942. A difficult and frightening situation to put it mildly, but then consider that in order to survive your only available option is to masquerade… as an Iranian. These are the circumstances pitched as being based on true events that drive story of this new Holocaust film. A Belarussian production directed by Ukrainian filmmaker Vadim Perelman, *Persian Lessons* follows the struggles of Belgian Jew, Gilles (Nahuel Pérez Biscayart) as he narrowly avoids death. Over the course of the film he is forced to teach Farsi to the camp commandant Koch (Lars Eidinger) – a frustrated chef who dreams of opening a restaurant in Tehran after the war. This already implausible plot then has a twist – Gilles actually speaks no Farsi and has to invent a whole new language to stay alive.

If this sounds unpromising then it is worth bearing in mind that *Persian Lessons*, despite its outlandish premise, has been positively received. It was given a Special Gala screening at the 2020 Berlin Film Festival and was also selected as the Belarussian entry for Best International Feature Film at the 93rd Academy Awards. A significant amount of this acclaim is largely thanks to the two lead performances.

Argentine actor Biscayart skilfully portrays the subtle intelligence needed to hoodwink not just the commandant, but everyone else, that he is indeed Iranian (or Persian as the film states) while also conveying the constant stress this puts him under. As Koch, German actor Eidinger plays a complicated man who is domineering and occasionally violent but, like Gilles, has potential secrets of his own. Their interplay is a constant source of tension that carries the film for its duration, which is a great credit to their acting skills.

The performances in *Persian Lessons* are in fact all of high quality but unfortunately they struggle to make up for the film's deficiencies. That said, there are other virtues to be appreciated, such as the use of authentic languages (other than Gilles' 'Farsi') and the relentlessly bleak atmosphere. However, although there were many remarkable tales of survival during the Holocaust, the attempt to successfully pose as a Persian seems improbable. The film claims to be "inspired by a true story" but the supposed reality is never revealed. In fact, the absurdity of Gilles' situation leads to some quietly comedic moments which – given the seriousness of the subject matter – seems almost inappropriate. Black or gallows humour certainly existed in concentration camps but on this occasion it too often sits uncomfortably.

At their best, Holocaust movies speak to both the worst of human behaviour and the best of the human spirit. Films like *Schindler's List* and *The Pianist* retain their power because they are emphatically based on the stories of historical figures who were lucky enough to survive. When the Holocaust begins to be depicted in a fictional or semi-fictional way, its haunting warning of man's inhumanity runs the risk of being diminished because invented plots obscure the reality. Out of all historical movie genres, it is the Holocaust that must often be treated with the greatest care. *Persian Lessons* is finely acted and its intentions are good but it is likely to divide opinion on how the Holocaust should be depicted. **TG**

> **"OUT OF ALL HISTORICAL MOVIE GENRES, IT IS THE HOLOCAUST THAT MUST OFTEN BE TREATED WITH THE GREATEST CARE"**

NAHUEL PÉREZ BISCAYART
LARS EIDINGER
PERSIAN LESSONS
A FILM BY VADIM PERELMAN
70th Berlinale Special Gala

Persian Lessons is directed by Vadim Perelman, the Ukrainian director of the Oscar-nominated 2003 film House of Sand and Fog

Images: Witchfinder Publicity

THE HITLER YEARS VOLUME 2

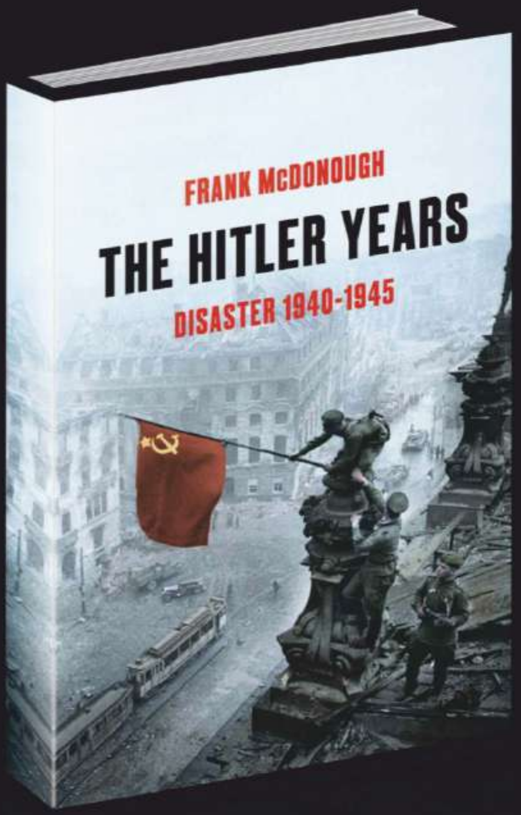
IN THIS SECOND INSTALMENT OF HIS CRITICALLY ACCLAIMED HISTORY ON THE RISE AND FALL OF THE THIRD REICH, PROFESSOR FRANK MCDONOUGH CHARTS HOW BETWEEN 1940-45 NAZI GERMANY WENT FROM CONQUEST TO CRIPPLING DEFEAT

Author: Frank McDonough **Publisher:** Head of Zeus **Price:** £35

In November 1940, the Soviet Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov sat in a Berlin bunker with his German counterpart, Joachim von Ribbentrop. As British bombs boomed outside, Molotov quipped that Nazi confidence in victory over Britain did not concur with his surroundings. It was not the last time that the British or the Soviets would prove the folly of Nazi arrogance in a Berlin bunker.

Professor Frank McDonough demonstrates an excellent ability to select such illuminating examples from the Second World War in the second volume of his mammoth new history, *The Hitler Years*. Like the impressive Volume 1, each heavily illustrated chapter is dedicated to exploring a year of Hitler's rule, from the lightning victory over France in 1940 to his suicide in 1945 during the world-crushing Battle of Berlin.

This book is like a time machine because McDonough writes so vividly. After reading, one feels as though one has been in the map room with Hitler, listening to his tone change as he loses his tactical flexibility over the years. One minute you're dining in private with Churchill and Stalin, the next you're watching the Wehrmacht advance and retreat in the east. The pages discussing the Holocaust, the victims of Nazi Germany and war crimes are rendered even more heartbreaking by the clarity of McDonough's writing. Anti-Semitism is rightly a key focus throughout as it fuelled many of Hitler's decisions and led to the murder of millions.



Omissions are essential in such lengthy volumes, but they are barely noticeable here. McDonough manages to combine discussion of events at the top with the revealing opinions of ordinary Germans and soldiers. This impressive level of detail, juxtaposing the man in the street with the man in the map room and the political with the social, is sustained throughout. Military enthusiasts will appreciate discussions of 'nuts and bolts' statistics whereas those interested in social and political history will likely be surprised by some of the anecdotes McDonough has found. Indeed, McDonough's 'V2' is far more effective in achieving its aims than the V-2 rockets mentioned within which killed more people building them than Allied civilians.

Although much of this book may be familiar to specialists as it describes pivotal events such as the Battle of Britain and Stalingrad, the brilliant lucidity of McDonough's prose makes the book feel fresh. It is also up to date with much new research, providing a synthesis of ever-evolving thought in one of the most studied topics, making it useful for students and general readers. Originality can be found too in the narrative threads which weave the lengthy chapters together. Each begins with a summary of Hitler's traditional New Year message and there is frequent reference to Hitler's private correspondence with Mussolini. Much thought is evident behind the pleasing structure of this book.

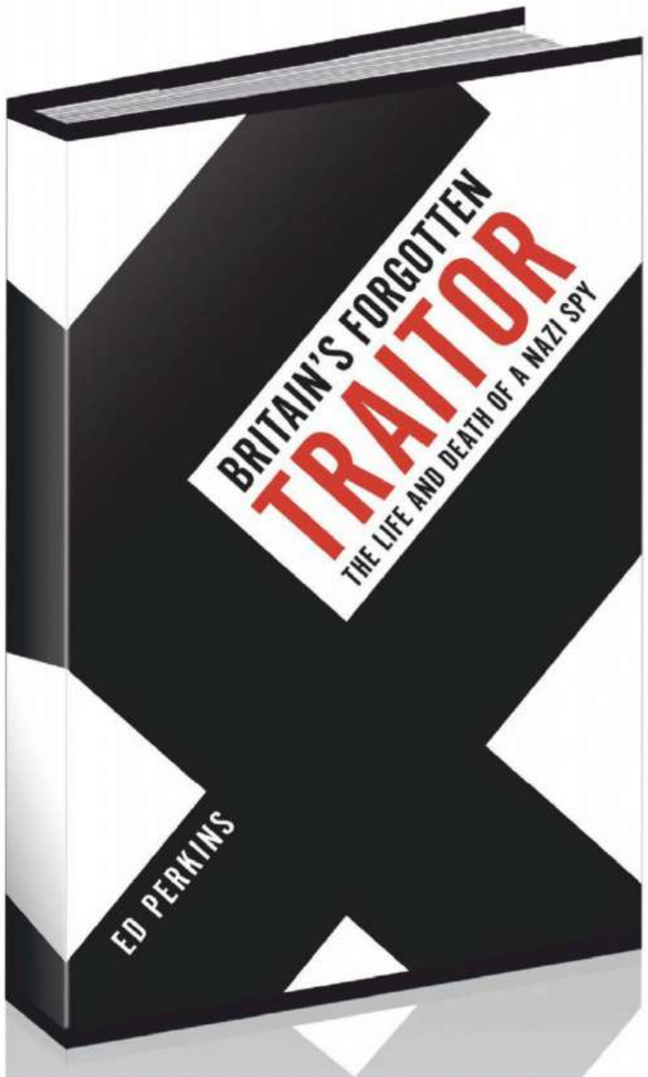
This is a book of big themes, big ideas and world changing events. Despite some editorial issues and debatable statements, this volume is an improvement on the eminently readable first. It's a masterpiece. **LDG**

© Alamy

BRITAIN'S FORGOTTEN TRAITOR

A NEW BIOGRAPHY FROM AMBERLEY PUBLISHING LAYS BARE THE LIFE OF A FORGOTTEN NAZI SPY

Author: Ed Perkins **Publisher:** Amberley **Price:** £20 **Released:** 15 February 2021



"He is evidently a shrewd customer and lacks neither guile nor cunning," was how Lieutenant Burke, a security man at Poole Quay, chose to describe Oswald John Job, the titular traitor in Ed Perkins' new biography. During his introduction, Perkins loosely blames his initial interest in Job on meeting renowned espionage author John Le Carré. We say loosely, because he attributes to Le Carré only his fascination with the psychology and motivation of a spy. It's an intriguing subject, one which clearly interested Le Carré himself, whose books obsess over the twin themes of identity and betrayal. However, we finished Perkins' work wondering if he had taken rather more than that from the master of espionage fiction as *Britain's Forgotten Traitor* works both as a biography and also as a gripping spy novel.

As the title suggests, the majority of the book deals with Job's time as a supposed spy and the circumstances surrounding both this and his eventual downfall. Yet we begin with Job as a boy and a potted history of his pre-war years. Perkins is very honest in his portrayal of Job, not hiding the man's flaws nor overly condemning him as a villain. For example, early in the book Perkins shares letters from Job, noting the obvious care and consideration towards his brother but highlighting the lack of interest in his own child.

This paints a very clear picture of the kind of man Perkins suspects Job to have been, before suddenly he's imprisoned in Nazi-occupied France. From here we learn of his time in an internment camp and then of his later escape neutral Spain. Or do we? The wool is suddenly pulled from over our eyes and we realise that what we have just read was in fact Job's own cover story – and maybe not reality. It is from here that we enter into some of the most fascinating parts of the book and the investigation into Job by both the authorities at Poole and MI5, and then the trial and Job's eventual execution.

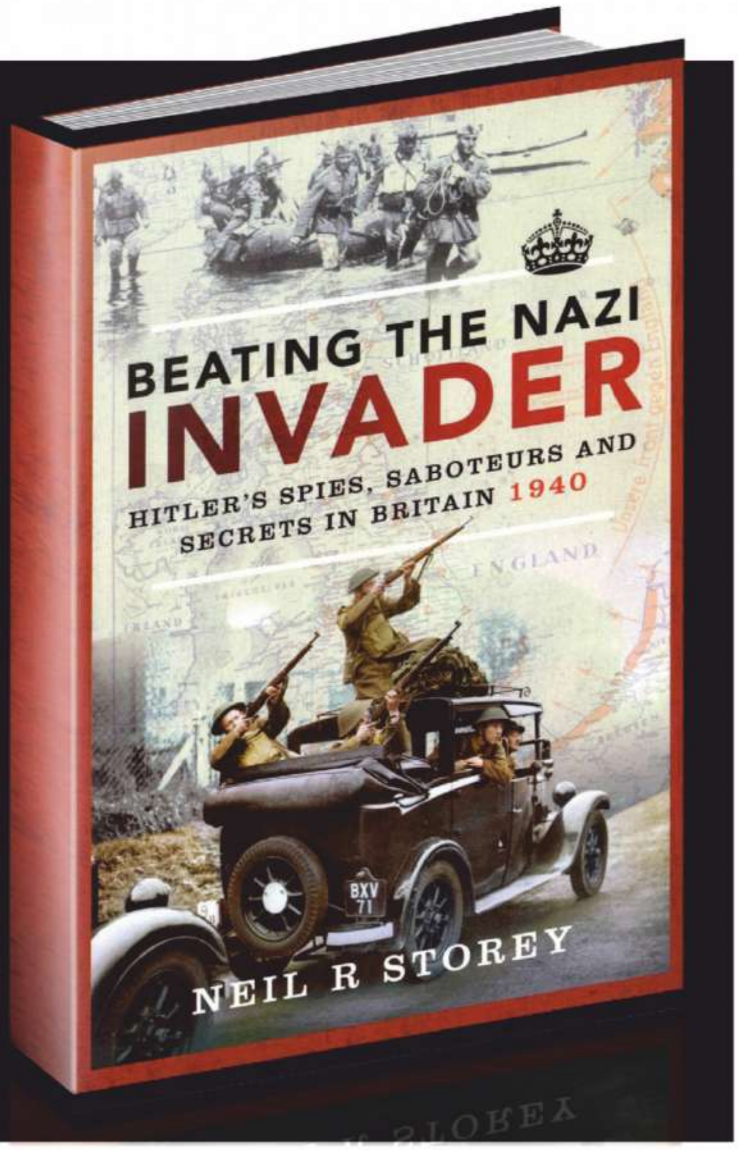
Perkins goes into incredible detail on almost every matter and the pictures he paints are extremely vivid. He makes sure to incorporate brief biographies of other important individuals within the text too, for example John Amery, the son of Cabinet member Leo Amery and fascist sympathiser. If we had to level one complaint towards *Britain's Forgotten Traitor*, it would be that some of these little detours veer quite far from the main road. For example, almost an entire chapter is spent conjuring an atmosphere of wartime Britain. However, thankfully these moments are rare and for the most part the depth Perkins goes into is greatly appreciated.

Perkins has written an engaging piece of espionage history covering, as the title suggests, an often forgotten Allied traitor. His style, utilising an almost thriller-novel approach to the story, paints an intriguing mystery and keeps his reader guessing. It's certainly one for both those interested in espionage and the Second World War. **CM**

BEATING THE NAZI INVADER

HITLER'S SPIES, SABOTEURS AND SECRETS IN BRITAIN, 1940

Author: Neil R Storey **Publisher:** Pen & Sword **Price:** £25



It's true to say that fascination with the proposed invasion of Britain in 1940, Operation Sealion, is both widespread and endless. Indeed, the subject has spawned many 'What if?' studies, novels and films as well as in-depth examinations of Britain's preparedness and Germany's ability to mount a successful cross-Channel invasion. However, until now nobody has seriously examined Nazi Germany's covert preparations for the occupation of the British Isles (nor, in fact, Britain's secret and extensive countermeasures) in a single volume such as this useful publication.

Accessing archives and a variety of other primary sources, Neil Storey provides the reader with an extensive insight into 'sleeping' Nazi sympathisers in Britain, German agents, the proposed London Gestapo HQ and measures taken by MI5 to hunt enemies of the state. Covered, too, are the measures taken for the protection of the Royal Family and both sides' lists of 'undesirables' – those who were to be picked-up by British intelligence in the event of invasion as well as those on Germany's Sonderfahndungsliste GB (the latter likely to be taken into custody and executed, imprisoned or deported).

Beating the Nazi Invader is a truly engrossing work which is a must for those with an interest in matters relating to German preparations for the proposed invasion and the measures put in place to counter it. Well-illustrated, with useful appendices, references and bibliography, this book is very highly recommended. **AS**

THE BATTLE OF MALDON

THE STORY OF HOW AN ENGLISH ARMY OF THE 10TH CENTURY FOUGHT TO THE DEATH AGAINST A FORCE OF VIKING RAIDERS

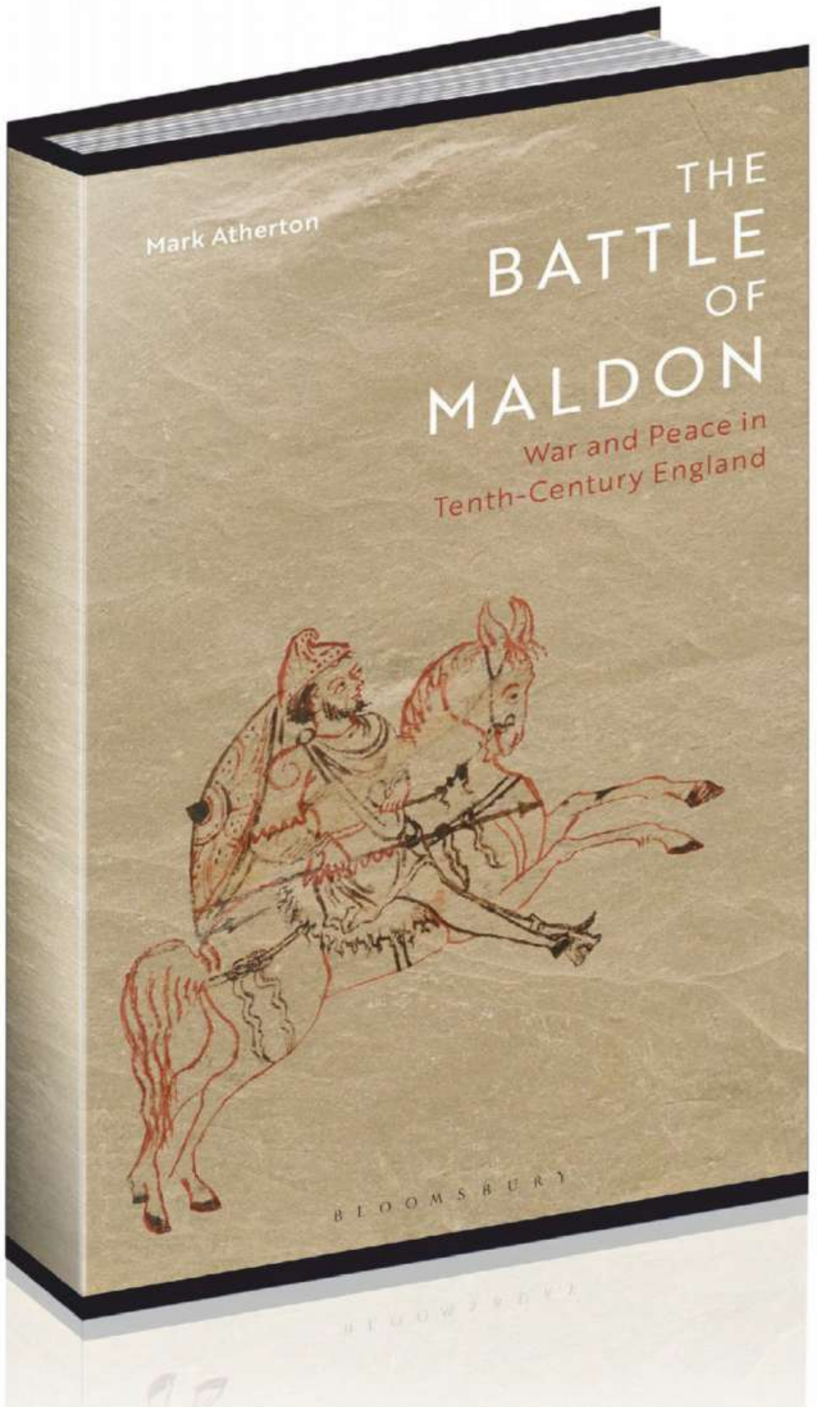
Author: Mark Atherton **Publisher:** Bloomsbury **Price:** £21.99

The Battle of Maldon was one of the defining conflicts of 10th century England. In his account of this encounter along the banks of the tidal River Blackwater in the year 991, Mark Atherton describes a bloody conflict between a determined nation faced with the advance of a ruthless enemy from the north.

Among those who fell that August day was Byrhtnoth, the leader of the East Saxon forces. But more than a heroic tale designed to inspire courage and unity in a time of crisis, the narrative celebrates ideals of loyalty and comradeship to commemorate an event that changed the face of English culture. The battle was immortalised in one of the last heroic Anglo-Saxon poems, written by an unknown contemporary.

Once the enemy chieftain Olaf and his horde were seen sailing up the Blackwater, Byrhtnoth rallied his men to the Saxon standard to prepare for the onslaught. Olaf demanded booty in the form of gold and armour, to which Byrhtnoth replied, “We will pay you with spear tips and sword blades.” After the battle Byrhtnoth’s body was found with its head missing, but his gold-hilted sword lay by his corpse.

The author points out that Maldon was one of the epic battles of early medieval England, conspicuous for its poetic narrative of martial glory. This became part of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, with the battle being depicted around a decade after the event. It chronicled how the Vikings had attacked various ports and market towns along England’s southeast coast. Setting aside the chronicler’s likely historical inaccuracies, all accounts agree that for three years afterwards there was a cessation of hostilities and peace prevailed in a turbulent land. The Battle of Maldon, Atherton declares, “Was instrumental… in creating an effective peace in the kingdom of England.” **JS**



> **“MALDON WAS ONE OF THE EPIC BATTLES OF EARLY MEDIEVAL ENGLAND, CONSPICUOUS FOR ITS POETIC NARRATIVE OF MARTIAL GLORY”**

Right: *The silhouetted statue of Byrhtnoth on the River Blackwater in Maldon, Essex, to commemorate the battle*

© Alamy

Q&A WITH

LIZ KESSLER

The best-selling author discusses the true story of her father's escape from the Third Reich which inspired her latest book *When The World Was Ours*

Can you tell us about your father's experiences in the Third Reich and how they inspired your new book?

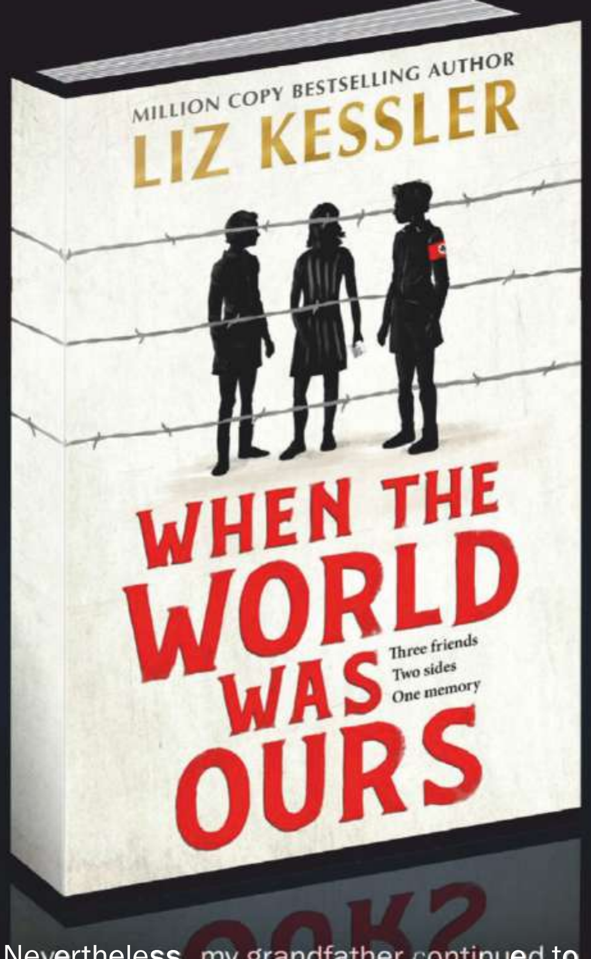
My dad grew up in Vienna. In 1934, when he was four years old, his father took him on a trip on a Danube steamer. My dad was kneeling on a seat and my grandfather warned him to be careful not to scuff the dress of a woman sitting beside him. The woman and her husband – a Mr and Mrs Jones from a small village outside Chester – got into conversation with my grandfather. As a result of this, they missed the stop where they were supposed to leave the steamer and join the rest of the group they were with. My grandfather offered to take them back to their hotel, but first he invited them to come home with him, to meet his wife and taste her homemade Sachertorte. The Joneses did this, and the following day my grandparents took them on a tour of Vienna.

Some time after their return to England, Mr and Mrs Jones wrote a thank you letter to my grandparents on their dental practice's headed paper. The letter was filed away.

Over the next few years, between 1934 and 1938, life became more and more impossible for Jews in Central Europe. Finally, in 1938, when the Anschluss took place and Austria became annexed to Germany, my family knew that they had to leave Vienna.

The only place they could go was Czechoslovakia as my grandfather was Czech. But when Hitler's army took Czechoslovakia less than a year later, it seemed my family's luck had run out. Their basic human rights were being eroded in every way imaginable by this stage, and their chance of getting out of the country seemed increasingly unlikely with every day that passed.

Kessler's father (centre) with his parents in England after their escape from the Nazis



Nevertheless, my grandfather continued to chase a seemingly impossible bureaucratic paper trail until, finally, he had everything he needed – except for one last item: an affidavit from someone in the country to which they hoped to go, taking full financial responsibility for them as they would have to leave all their assets and possessions behind.

My family knew no one who might do such a thing – until my grandfather looked through his papers and found the letter from Gladys Jones five years earlier. He wrote to the Joneses, telling them his family's circumstances and asking if there might be any chance of them providing him and his family with the affidavit they so desperately needed. He didn't think they would agree to such a thing – but they did. The Joneses said yes to everything and helped my family get the visas they needed in order to escape the Nazi regime and start their lives all over again in England.

How close is your character's story to your father's? Which facts did you keep and where did you take some artistic licence?

My book is narrated by three main characters: Leo, Elsa and Max. Leo's story is the one which most closely resembles my father's. Leo has a very similar moment to the one that took place in 1934. (The only difference is that it takes place on the Riesenrad Ferris Wheel in Vienna, rather than on a steamer!) The letter that leads to Leo's escape is taken directly from my dad's story. And aspects of his journey to England mirror tales my dad has told me. But beyond these facts, Leo's story is very much his own story, not my family's. Throughout my book, I have kept all aspects of the story as true to the facts of the Holocaust as I possibly could. So even when they might not be based on my own family's history, they are based on the truth of my Jewish heritage and the reality of so many Jewish people's lives at that time.

How else did British people help Jewish families in Europe?

One of the biggest forms of escape for Jewish people to England was through Domestic Service Visas. They are much less known about than, for example, the Kindertransport, and yet they saved about twice as many people. Roughly 20,000 people came to the UK from Germany and Austria through these visas.

Individuals did all sorts of brave acts during the Second World War – not always with the support of their own governments. One person whose acts of bravery and selfless generosity were unknown about for over 50 years is Nicholas Winton. Winton worked with relief organisations to set up the Czech Kindertransport, and saved 669 children's lives.

There are documented cases of individuals using all sorts of covers to help Jewish families escape: civil servants using a love of opera as a pretext for multiple trips to Germany in the 1930s so that they could help secure safe passage for dozens of Jews who would otherwise have perished in the Holocaust; passport control officers secretly helping to provide papers for Jewish people to flee. Countless people were involved in helping children not only to come to the country but to start a new life once they were here. England's immigration laws may have been tight at this time, but the warmth and generosity of the human spirit can be found in all sorts of places, rising above laws, danger and worries about their own safety in order to help fellow human beings in peril.

WHEN THE WORLD WAS OURS BY LIZ KESSLER IS OUT NOW (HARDBACK,£12.99, SIMON & SCHUSTER CHILDREN'S BOOKS)

5 BEST BOOKS ON

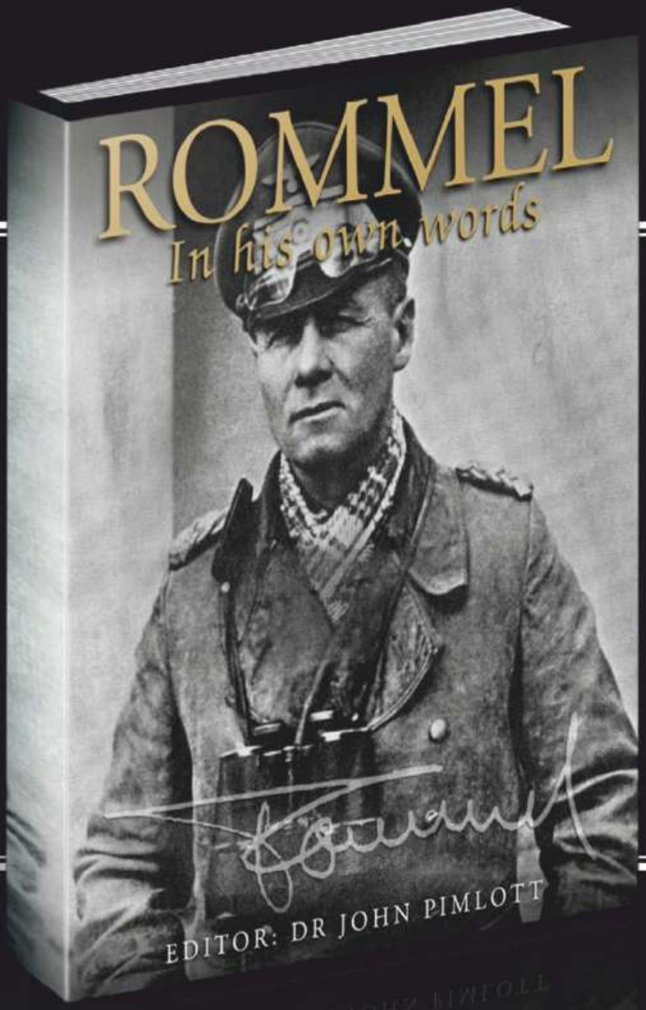
ROMMEL

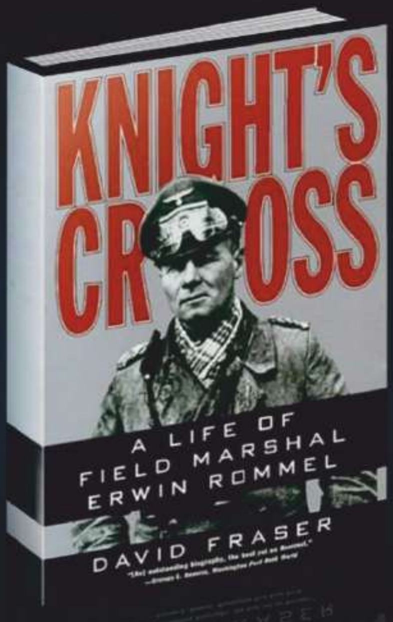
Want to learn more about one of the most renowned leaders in military history? These books tell you everything you need to know about the Desert Fox

ROMMEL IN HIS OWN WORDS

Dr John Pimlott

Including letters, diary entries, orders and memoirs, this extensive reference tome is the essential groundwork for any deep study of Rommel. While orders and day-to-day reports and accounts of the frontline provide an immense insight into his decisions on the frontline, his own personal correspondence reveals more about the Desert Fox's private convictions, doubts and philosophies. Dr John Pimlott's commentary maintains a useful context for these sources, and are accompanied by brilliant photography, including many images captured by Rommel himself.

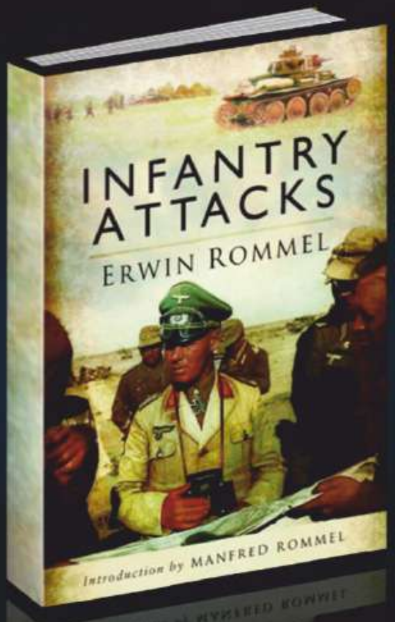

ROMMEL
In his own words
EDITOR: DR JOHN PIMLOTT


KNIGHT'S CROSS
A LIFE OF FIELD MARSHAL ERWIN ROMMEL
DAVID FRASER

Knight's Cross: A Life of Field Marshal Erwin Rommel

General Sir David Fraser

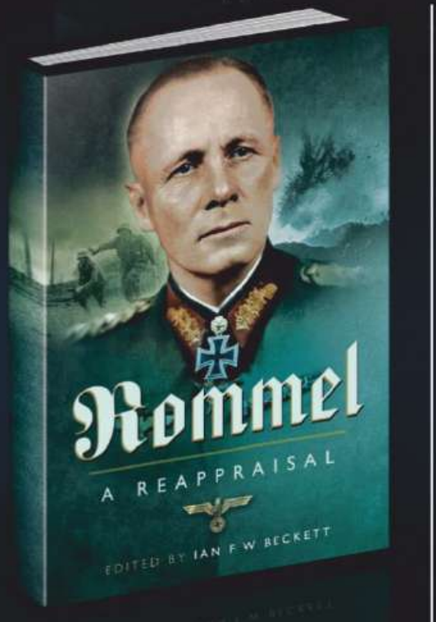
Himself a respected veteran of the war and later an historian and author, Fraser's biography of Rommel provides a thorough account of Rommel's experience during the First World War, before inevitably focusing on his campaigns in France and Africa, ending with his role in the attempted assassination of Hitler in July 1944.


INFANTRY ATTACKS
ERWIN ROMMEL
Introduction by MANFRED ROMMEL

Infantry Attacks

Erwin Rommel

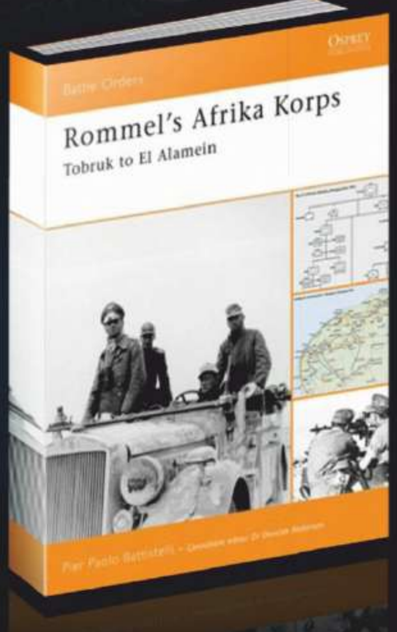
The first of an intended series on military tactics, this book recounts Rommel's own experiences while serving on the Eastern and Italian Fronts during the First World War. Rommel includes many of his own mistakes as examples for future commanders and also delineates his view on the ideal, honourable, German soldier.


Rommel
A REAPPRAISAL
EDITED BY IAN F W BECKETT

Rommel A Reappraisal

Ian FW Beckett

With the goal of reassessing the legacy of arguably the most famous German general of the 20th century, this collection of essays debates Rommel's personal convictions, his dedication or lack thereof to Hitler, and his reputation as a chivalrous soldier.


OSPREY
Battle Orders
Rommel's Afrika Korps
Tobruk to El Alamein

Rommel's Afrika Korps

Pier Paolo Battistelli

In a thorough breakdown of the topic that is typical of publisher Osprey's meticulous titles, author Pier Paolo Battistelli unpacks the machines, uniforms, command structure and hierarchy of Rommel's Afrika Korps. With colourful illustrations and map references, this is a worthy first foray into the Fox's North Africa campaign.

SOME DEATHS SHOCK THE WORLD, OTHERS CHANGE THE COURSE OF HISTORY

Delve into the coups and conspiracies behind history's most infamous murders. Including over 25 of the world's most powerful and influential figures, from Abraham Lincoln to Franz Ferdinand and JFK to Martin Luther King

NEW
ASSASSINATIONS
THE MURDERS, PLOTS AND CONSPIRACIES THAT CHANGED HISTORY
OVER 25 INFAMOUS DEATHS
FROM THE MAKERS OF ALL ABOUT HISTORY
BRUTAL COUPS
FAILED ATTEMPTS
INSIDE THE PLOT TO KILL HITLER
All About History
Book of Assassinations
ISBN 978-1-83850-614-8

ON SALE NOW

FUTURE

Ordering is easy. Go online at:

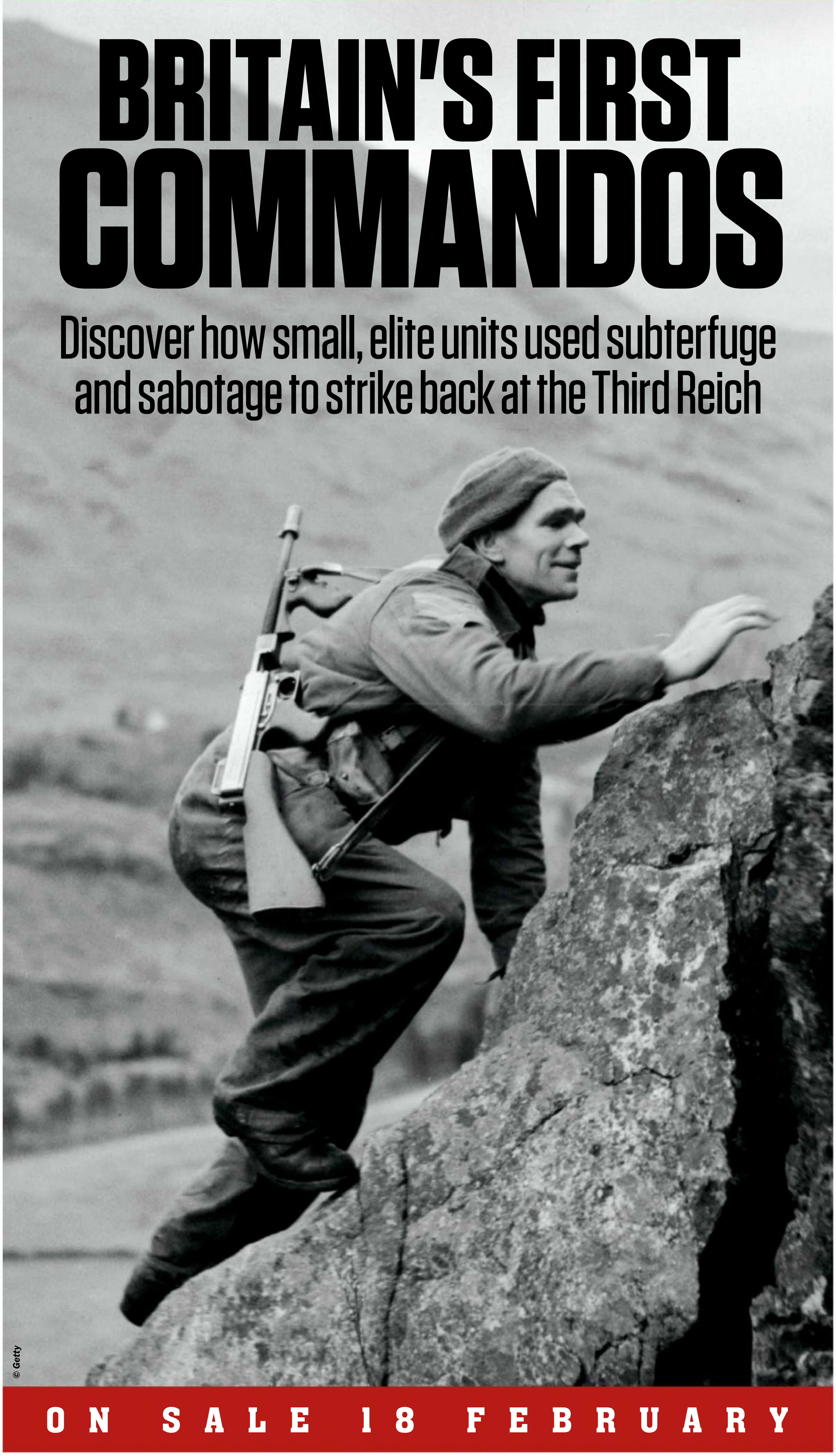
www.myfavouritemagazines.co.uk

Or get it from selected supermarkets & newsagents

NEXT MONTH

BRITAIN'S FIRST COMMANDOS

Discover how small, elite units used subterfuge and sabotage to strike back at the Third Reich



© Getty

ON SALE 18 FEBRUARY

HISTORY of WAR

Future PLC Quay House, The Ambury, Bath BA1 1UA

Editorial
Editor-in-Chief **Tim Williamson**
timothy.williamson@futurenet.com
Senior Designer **Curtis Fermor-Dunman**
Features Editor **Tom Garner**
Production Editor **Iain Noble**
Senior Art Editor **Duncan Crook**

Contributors
Hareth Al Bustani, Luke Daly-Groves, Charles Ginger, Michael Haskew, Mike Jones, Callum McKelvie, Andy Saunders, Mark Simner, Jules Stewart

Photography
Alamy, Battlefield Design, Rocio Espin, Getty
All copyrights and trademarks are recognised and respected

Advertising
Media packs are available on request
UK Commercial Director **Clare Dove**
clare.dove@futurenet.com
Senior Advertising Manager **Matthew Johnston**
matthew.johnston@futurenet.com
07801 930735
Account Manager **Garry Brookes**
garry.brookes@futurenet.com
+44 020 3970 4176

International Licensing
History of War is available for licensing. Contact the Licensing team to discuss partnership opportunities
Head of Print Licensing **Rachel Shaw**
licensing@futurenet.com

Subscriptions
Email enquiries **help@mymagazine.co.uk**
UK orderline & enquiries **0330 333 1113**
Overseas order line and enquiries **+44 (0) 330 333 1113**
Online orders & enquiries **www.magazinesdirect.com**
CRM Director **Louise Dudfield**

Circulation
Head of Newstrade **Tim Mathers**

Production
Head of Production **Mark Constance**
Production Project Manager **Clare Scott**
Advertising Production Manager **Joanne Crosby**
Digital Editions Controller **Jason Hudson**
Production Manager **Nola Cokely**

Management
Chief Content Officer **Aaron Asadi**
Commercial Finance Director **Dan Jotcham**
Brand Director **Evan Kypreos**
Head of Art & Design **Greg Whittaker**

Printed by William Gibbons & Sons Ltd

Distributed by Marketforce, 5 Churchill Place, Canary Wharf, London, E14 5HU www.marketforce.co.uk Tel: 0203 787 9060

ISSN 2054-376X

We are committed to only using magazine paper which is derived from responsibly managed, certified forestry and chlorine-free manufacture. The paper in this magazine was sourced and produced from sustainable managed forests, conforming to strict environmental and socioeconomic standards. The manufacturing paper mill holds full FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) certification and accreditation

All contents © 2021 Future Publishing Limited or published under licence. All rights reserved. No part of this magazine may be used, stored, transmitted or reproduced in any way without the prior written permission of the publisher. Future Publishing Limited (company number 2008885) is registered in England and Wales. Registered office: Quay House, The Ambury, Bath BA1 1UA. All information contained in this publication is for information only and is, as far as we are aware, correct at the time of going to press. Future cannot accept any responsibility for errors or inaccuracies in such information. You are advised to contact manufacturers and retailers directly with regard to the price of products/services referred to in this publication. Apps and websites mentioned in this publication are not under our control. We are not responsible for their contents or any other changes or updates to them. This magazine is fully independent and not affiliated in any way with the companies mentioned herein.

If you submit material to us, you warrant that you own the material and/or have the necessary rights/permissions to supply the material and you automatically grant Future and its licensees a licence to publish your submission in whole or in part in any/all issues and/or editions of publications, in any format published worldwide and on associated websites, social media channels and associated products. Any material you submit is sent at your own risk and, although every care is taken, neither Future nor its employees, agents, subcontractors or licensees shall be liable for loss or damage. We assume all unsolicited material is for publication unless otherwise stated, and reserve the right to edit, amend, adapt all submissions.

ipso. Regulated

Widely Recycled

FUTURE
Connectors.
Creators.
Experience
Makers.

Future plc is a public
company quoted on the
London Stock Exchange
(symbol: FUTR)
www.futureplc.com

Chief Executive **Zillah Byng-Thorne**
Non-executive Chairman **Richard Huntingford**
Chief Financial Officer **Rachel Addison**

Tel +44 (0)1225 442 244

MEDIEVAL TARGE

The back of the shield also contains traces of a painted figure of Saint Christopher, whose likeness was believed to protect people from sudden death

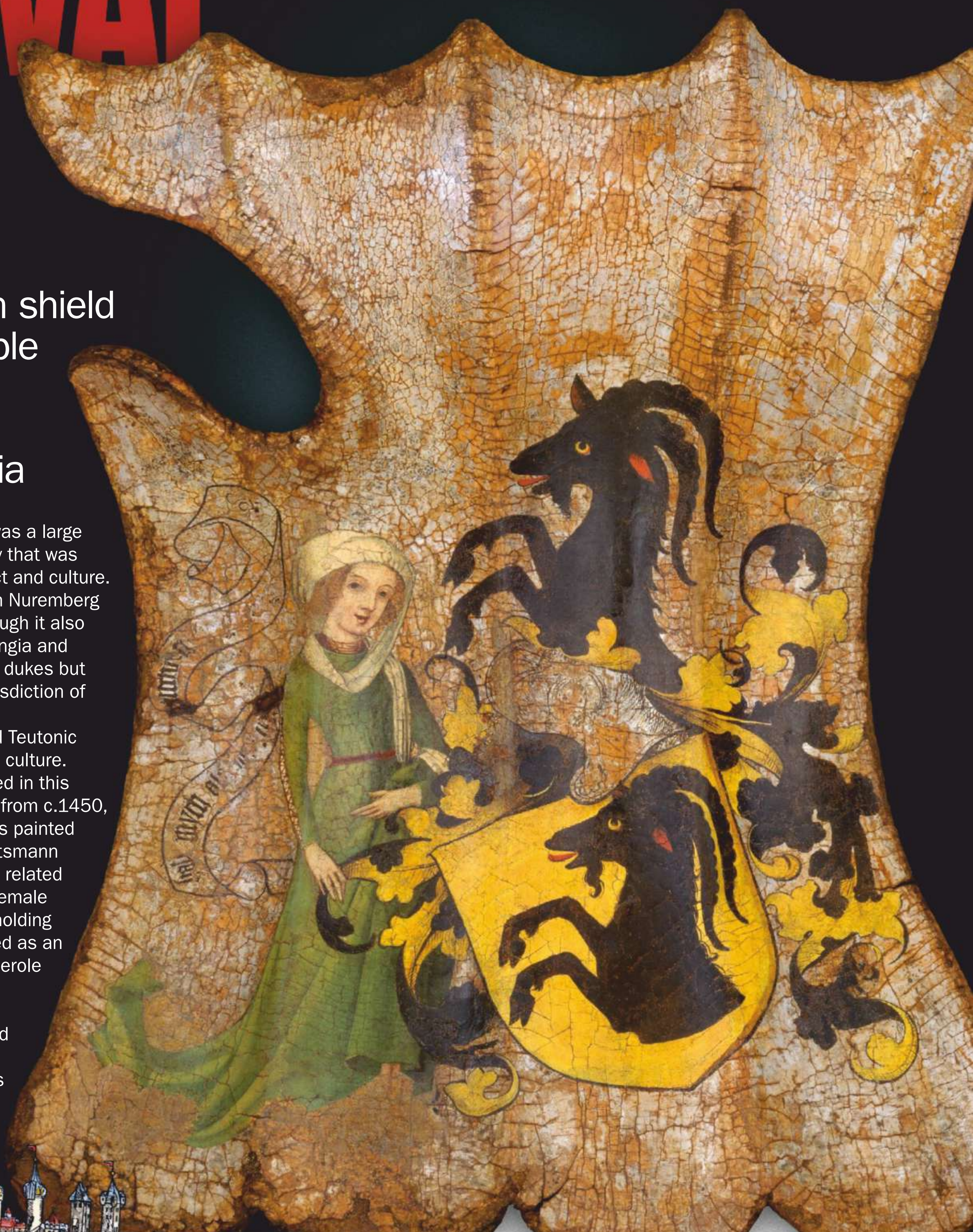


Image: Metropolitan Museum of Art

This 15th century German shield is a colourfully rare example of the opulent knightly culture that existed in the wealthy region of Franconia

During the 15th century, Franconia was a large region of southern central Germany that was characterised by its Frankish dialect and culture. Most of its land was in Bavaria with Nuremberg acting as its unofficial capital although it also comprised of territory in Baden-Württemberg, Thuringia and Hesse. Early medieval Franconia had been ruled by dukes but from the 13th century it mostly came under the jurisdiction of the Prince-Bishopric of Würtzburg.

A powerful centre for the Holy Roman Empire and Teutonic Order, Franconia was steeped in a martial, chivalric culture. The richness of this knightly society can be glimpsed in this extraordinarily well-preserved targe (shield). Dating from c.1450, it's primarily made from wood, leather and linen. It's painted with a coat of arms that belonged to either the Gottsmann or Türriegel noble families, although they were both related to each other. To the side of the coat of arms is a female figure wearing a contemporary green dress. She's holding a banderole which was a long, narrow flag that acted as an ornamental streamer on a knight's lance. The banderole bears the German motto, "Hab mych als ich bin…" ("Take me as I am…").

The targe could have been used for both mounted combat or in a tournament. It was not designed for longevity but its remarkable state of preservation is due to its vivid colours being hidden for centuries beneath other layers of paint. The uncovering revealed that the original paint was set on a foundation layer of silver-foil, which gives some indication of its owner's wealth.

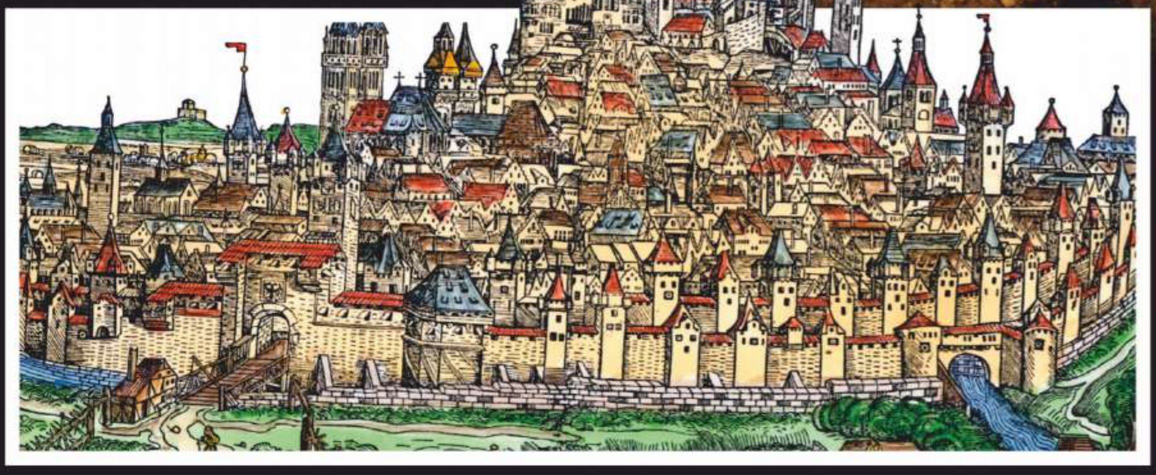


Image: Alamy

A hand-coloured woodcut depicting 15th century Nuremberg, including its medieval walls

The targe is part of the collections of the Department of Arms and Armor at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. Known as The Met, the museum is the largest art museum in the United States and contains the popular Department of Arms and Armor.

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT:
WWW.METMUSEUM.ORG

"Speak French Spanish or Italian as they are really spoken"

Save £34.99

+ Plus choose
OR
MP3
bien-dire
INITIAL
DÉBUTANT À INTERMÉDIAIRE
Montpellier, l'ensoleillée
bien-dire
INTERMÉDIAIRE À AVANCÉ
biendire.com
TUTTO ITALIANO
From Italy for learners of Italian
LEONARDO A TUTTO TONDO
; puntoycoma
ISABEL ALLENDE
Free
ELECTRONIC DICTIONARY
worth £24.99

Now you can improve your French, Spanish or Italian with these acclaimed bi-monthly audio magazines for learners of French, Spanish and Italian.

Bien-dire, *Bien-dire Initial*, *Tutto italiano* and *Punto y Coma* are published six times a year from France, Spain and Italy and include a glossy magazine packed full of lively, topical and original articles and in-depth interviews in French, Spanish, or Italian to give you the inside track on French, Spanish, or Italian culture. Key words and phrases are glossed into English on the facing page. The articles, in turn, are narrated on the accompanying 60-minute audio CD to enable you to improve your listening comprehension and understand French, Spanish, or Italian as it's really spoken. In addition, every feature is graded for difficulty so that you can assess your progress with each issue. If you now want to be able to speak like a native, a subscription to *Bien-dire*, *Bien-dire Initial*, *Tutto Italiano*, or *Punto y Coma* will inspire, motivate and help you to achieve fluency.

Bien-dire Initial is published on alternate months to Bien-dire to enable you, should you wish, to subscribe to both French magazines at the same time (12 issues a year, six of each).

Subscribe Today!

100% MONEY BACK GUARANTEE

Subscribe Today for one year just £89 (Normal Price £99) plus receive for FREE an electronic dictionary bookmark worth £24.99--a combined saving of over £34.99!

	Magazine + CDs	Magazine + MP3s
01. Bien-dire Initial French Audio Magazine: **Level: Beginner - Intermediate**	☐	☐
02. Bien-dire French Audio Magazine: **Level: Intermediate - Advanced**	☐	☐
03. Punto y Coma Spanish Audio Magazine: **Level: Intermediate - Advanced**	☐	☐
04. Tutto italiano Italian Audio Magazine: **Level: Intermediate - Advanced**	☐	☐

** When ordering decide in what format (CD or Download) that you want the audio programme. As each magazine is published on alternate months there is no overlap in content.*

3 easy ways to order:

UK: 24/7 freephone 0800 141 2210

VISIT **www.languages-direct.com/HWK120**

Pay by credit card or send a cheque to
Languages Direct Ltd, Spike Island,
133 Cumberland Road, Bristol BS1 6UX, UK

MEDIA REF: HWK120

WAR THUNDER
New? GET YOUR FREE BONUS
Experience the Battle of Britain yourself in War Thunder!
PLAY NOW FOR FREE
WARTHUNDER.COM/FLY

Gaijin Entertainment
© 2009—2018 by Gaijin Entertainment. All rights reserved.

XBOX ONE PS4 Windows STEAM Mac oculus VIVE

12 www.pegi.info